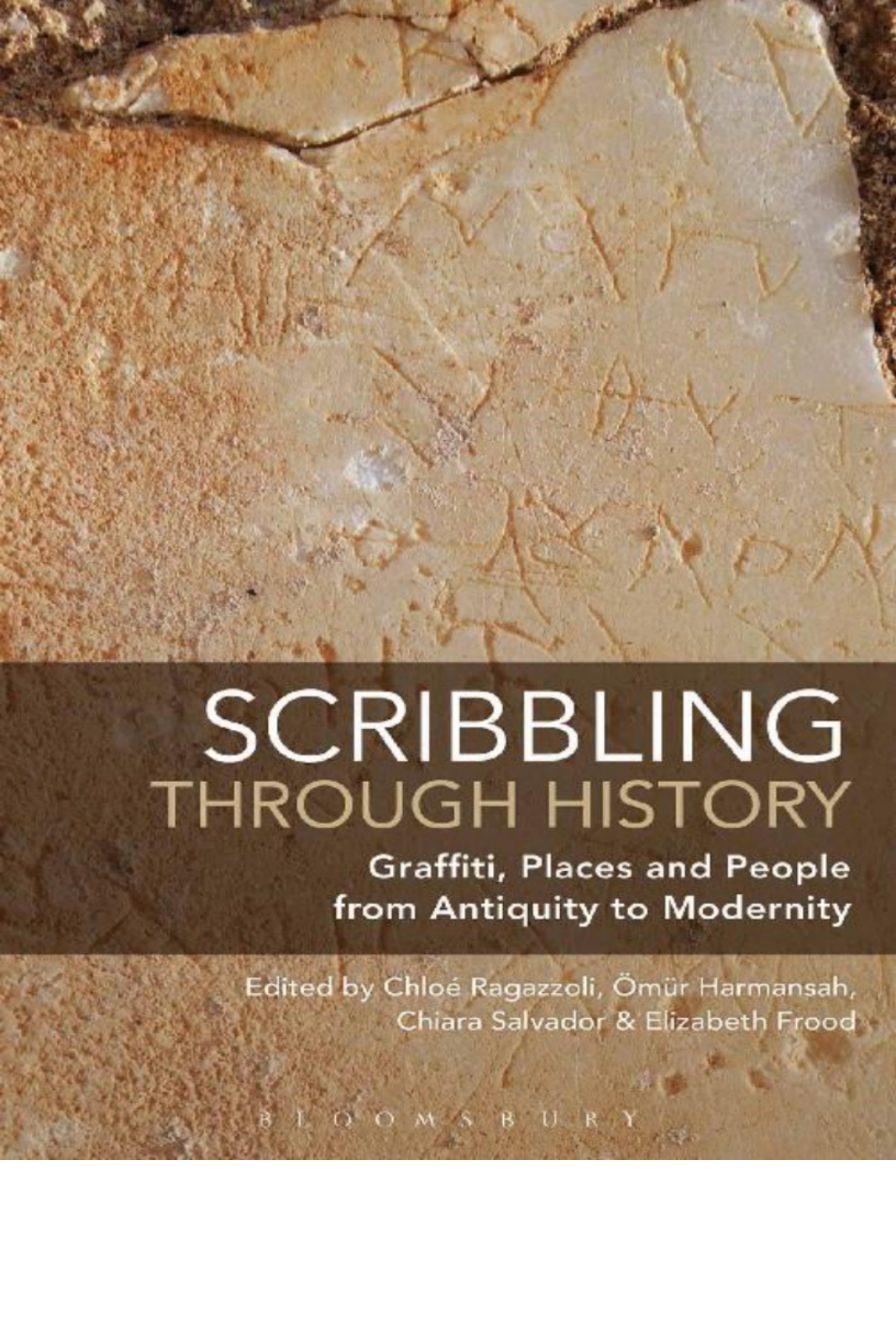


Scribbling Through History

**Chloé Ragazzoli,Ömür
Harmansah,Chiara
Salvador,Elizabeth Frood**

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SCRIBBLING THROUGH HISTORY

**Graffiti, Places and People
from Antiquity to Modernity**

Edited by Chloé Ragazzoli, Ömür Harmansah,
Chiara Salvador & Elizabeth Frood

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Elizabeth Olton is a specialist in ancient Maya visual culture with a focus on elite mortuary art and architecture. She has recently become fascinated with the imagery, meaning and preservation of graffiti from the sixth and seventh century Tikal. In 2015, she co-edited with Troy Lovata *Understanding Graffiti*. Olton has taught at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the University of New Mexico, and the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe.

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Preface

Many of the authors of this book met in 2013 during ‘Scribbling through history’, a three-day workshop that I organized in Oxford. The meeting was devoted to the relationships between graffiti, individual expression and social interactions, from ancient times until the modern era. It took place at Ertegun House, University of Oxford, on 23rd-25th September 2013, and brought together scholars who have produced many primary studies of such inscriptions in their respective fields. The ambition of the workshop was to address historical graffiti in a holistic manner as a specific cultural practice and as an anthropological object that illustrates key aspects of human experience. It aimed to foster cross-regional, diachronic and integrative approaches and plenty of space was left for discussions and debate, in plenary sessions or over a cup of tea. Three days of intense, sometimes heated, discussion did not get us much closer to an overarching definition; instead the spectrum of forms, places and functions of graffiti grew ever larger. Finding common definitions for inscriptions as different as Mayan images of power, priests scribbling in ancient Egypt and wall writing in early modern London was possibly a collectively delusional enterprise, but it was also a stimulating one, although exhausting.

Nevertheless, this rich and dynamic experience led us to consider that graffiti in all their diversity constitute an epigraphic field in their own right. Elizabeth Froom, who had helped and advised during the preparation of the conference, Ömür Harmanşah, Chiara Salvador, who had acted as a helper during the event, and I decided to join forces to create a book that would begin to take stock of this variety, present graffiti practices in a large array of cultures and periods and that would explore core themes, such as: self-fashioning and group identity, space appropriation, posterity and temporality of writing, and literacy and manuscript culture. We invited participants in the workshop as well as other authors to contribute to a collective book, which has not been designed as a traditional volume of conference proceedings, but rather as a set of carefully crafted short essays by specialists that tackle core questions through a small number of case studies from cultures ranging from ancient China and Egypt through medieval Europe to modern Turkey. This wide spectrum of practices and their conceptual landscape is explored in the general introduction below, and in three short texts introducing the sections of this book. These widely benefited from the discussions which occurred during the workshop,

whether or not the participants took part in the writing of the book.

The preparation of this volume took more than three years, and several institutions were instrumental in the completion of the project. Support for the conference and this book has been kindly provided by The John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund, the Budge Fund (University College, University of Oxford), the Faculty of Oriental Studies (University of Oxford), Ertegun House (University of Oxford) and the French Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS – UMR 8167 – Orient et Méditerranée – Mondes Pharaoniques). Special thanks are due to Edward Love for his emergency help with the final stage of the proofs. And last but not least, I thank Hélène Valance for suggesting the title ‘Scribbling through History’ that presided over our work for more than four years.

Finally, just as this volume was going into production, we heard the very sad news of Professor Glen Dudbridge’s passing. Professor Dudbridge had voluntarily and enthusiastically joined this adventure when it was only a project, the topic for a series of invigorating conversations at dinner at University College between the eminent emeritus professor of Chinese and the postdoctoral research fellow I was then. We will remember with gratitude and a sense of privilege his extreme kindness, humble brilliance and uncompromising scholarship, which contributed a great deal to our desire to bring this volume to completion.

Chloé Ragazzoli. Paris, March 2017.

Introduction

C. Ragazzoli, Ö. Harmanşah and C. Salvador

‘Mother of God, help your servants’ say the barely legible, clumsily handwritten lines in Greek on the polished yet weathered surface of a Byzantine marble revetment (Fig. I.1).¹ The graffito blends with the pockmarks, the oxidized weathering, a little splash of mortar and the warm orange colour of the stone. The inscription is the *patina*, defined by Shannon Lee Dawdy as ‘aura made curiously concrete’ (Dawdy 2016: 11). Like the intricate weathering on the surface, the materiality of the graffito speaks to the intimate history of the stone’s surface and its resilience over centuries. This revetment fragment from a Byzantine structure was reused in an early modern mosque in the modern town of Ilgın in Turkey’s Konya Province. Shortly after its recent recording, this fragment fell victim to a corrupt architectural restoration project, where the piece was disappeared in the newly constructed mosque, without proper conservation (see Harmanşah, this volume). The resilience and ephemerality of this graffito, its material existence in a weathered ruin, its fragile, poetic voice from the deep past, and the sincere desire for salvation speaks well to the subject matter of the present volume.

Modern echoes of ancient practices

‘Graffiti’ was originally a scholarly term coined by the classical archaeologists who excavated Pompeii in the nineteenth century to describe an ancient and specialized form of inscription: the scribbles that liberally covered the walls of its houses and public buildings in that violently destroyed and beautifully preserved city (Garrucci 1856; see Benefiel, this volume). The contextually restricted, highly academic origin of the word – as well as the realia that go with it – have largely been absorbed into modern street culture, unavoidably colouring our perceptions of similar phenomena in the ancient world. When the word ‘graffiti’ is dropped into everyday conversation, we imagine urban landscapes of sprayed panels, lines of dubious poetry scribbled on toilet doors, love messages such as ‘A loves B’ scrawled everywhere. When we are confronted by ‘graffiti’, familiar assumptions crop up relating to personal expression, transgression,

immediacy, access to counterculture, as well as defacement and aggressive territorialism. *Tags* (signatures), one of the first and most prolific forms of graffiti that appeared in New York's poorest neighbourhoods in the late 1960s, still compete to emerge from the densely scrawled surfaces of modern cities. To the eyes of the uninitiated, this jumble of letters, signs and symbols appear as primal responses to an animalistic instinct to mark one's territory. Thus, feelings towards and discourse about graffiti in past societies always prick our curiosity. When, in spring 2013, a Chinese teenager published a photo on Facebook of an incision that he had just left on a relief in the temple of Luxor, he was sternly admonished by the Chinese authorities and the worldwide media. Yet, by writing 'Ding Jinhao was here', he was enacting an ancient Egyptian behaviour. What was once an expression of devotion in a literate milieu became, in other cultural systems, a clear example of modern hooliganism. It also seems that our modern concept of 'heritage' creates sanctified unalterable entities, disallowing practices of appropriation such as graffiti, however transhistorical the practice may be.



Fig. I.1 Spolia stone within a fifteenth century mosque wall in Ilgın, Konya province, Turkey. © Ö. Harmanşah.

This confrontation between modern assumptions and ancient practices is nowhere better seen than in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979). In this religious satire, Brian Cohen, born in a stable next to that of Jesus, becomes a political activist and joins the 'People's Front of Judea' to fight the Roman occupation of his country. He decides to write a political slogan – a Latin version of 'Romans go home' – in the forum by night. Unfortunately, he is caught red-handed by a centurion, played by John Cleese, who is absolutely horrified – not by the act of graffiti-writing, but by Brian's bad Latin. The Roman officer gives Brian a good scolding and instructs him to copy his message one hundred times in good, grammatical Latin, a typical schoolboy detention exercise; the sequence finishes as dawn approaches, with a wide shot showing an exhausted Brian having covered the forum with his political slogan. For us, much of the comic impact of this scene lies in the disjunction between our expectations and the historical reality of practices that are widely spread through different societies.

Impetus for a book on graffiti throughout history

Graffiti have been left on the geological surfaces and monuments of many societies. In recent years, epigraphers, archaeologists, art historians and other specialists have been studying these in a wide range of cultures and places, firstly by recording and editing the primary data, then by interpreting them. Whilst specialist expertise is required to understand the content and meaning of graffiti within any given culture, many scholars sought an overarching approach that would allow the historical and ethnographic specificities of these epigraphic practices to emerge. This was the initial impetus for the conference held in Oxford in 2013,² which brought together specialists working on graffiti in as many different cultures as possible. The aim was to move their individual bodies of evidence out of their relative disciplinary isolation and give them a platform to discuss similarities and contrasts in their definitions, theoretical approaches and methodologies.

For the editors, two books have been particularly instrumental in this shift of perspective. Juliet Fleming's *Graffiti and the writing arts of Early Modern England* (2001) showed how graffiti and other writing on objects and the body were integral to the practices of literacy of the time. The book investigates what is superficially understood as marginal writing (writing outside books), including tattooing and the inscription of verses on a range of objects (e.g. a window and a table), as well as graffiti. To our eyes, these 'writing arts' may seem marginal, an attitude that is probably influenced by our preconceived expectations of past cultures, yet as such, they have not been fully integrated into surveys of early modern English culture despite being an essential part of it. In a book devoted to the Renaissance, a period whose cultural unconscious did not distinguish completely between the

message and its medium, remarks on the 'ostentatious materiality' of texts and poems (Fleming 2001: 13) show more generally how textual graffiti cannot be considered for their linguistic content alone, but must be considered in their 'fully material, visual mode, as [they] exist in [their] moment, at a particular site' (Fleming 2001: 20). This monograph makes graffiti a highly contextualized practice that also raises the question of the voice – of who speaks to whom (Fleming 2001: 41).

Ten years later, *Ancient Graffiti in Context* (Baird and Taylor 2011), a collection of essays devoted to graffiti from the Roman and Greek worlds, proved another landmark in graffiti studies. In particular, it raised issues of definition, problematizing the positioning of graffiti either as part of the existing epigraphic corpora, which elides their specificity, or as a separate category, which all too often proceeds from modern categorizations. The introductory essay showed that if Pompeian graffiti are often considered to be the archetype of ancient graffiti, the reaction to their discovery in the nineteenth century also shaped many preconceptions and anachronisms, namely 'that they allow an unmediated contact with the writer, they were made by the lower classes, and they were a subcategory of ancient inscriptions' (Baird and Taylor 2011: 2). As a result, 'graffiti have been implicitly defined by scholars of the Greek and Roman world as texts or images which appear in unexpected places, where they do not obviously belong' (Baird and Taylor 2011: 4). The chapters of the book treat a wide range of Pompeian graffiti, as well as corpora from elsewhere, in terms of both content and graphic registers (Baird and Taylor 2011: 2). The editors' call for contextualization is an invitation to place the question of graffiti within issues of 'literacy, orality, [...] relationship between text and image, [...] display of emotions, performance and the material construction of memory' (Baird and Taylor 2011: 3). They productively define graffiti as 'events' that are 'socially connective' and witnesses to 'ancient experience' (Baird and Taylor 2011: 6, 1, 8). The performativity and visibility of graffiti create 'sites of communal or cultural memory'. As such, graffiti fulfil a role of place-making. Our volume seeks to take up this challenge in a number of ways.

Like the conference that led to it, this book does not aim to be a manifesto, a handbook, or an exhaustive treatise on graffiti. If it has one ambition, it is to be a laboratory which allows us to look at diverse samples of material, using them as a testing ground for experiences, definitions and frameworks from which patterns, behaviours and questions emerge.³

What graffiti are: an (im)possible definition

Objects such as graffiti, which are at once alien and all too familiar, raise wide issues of definition. Graffiti often convey notions of an anarchic and underground urban culture. It may seem paradoxical that the word was

actually coined to categorize ancient sources within a classical context, a pinnacle of Western culture's normative perceptions of its origins. The *Oxford English Dictionary online* entry for 'graffito' starts: 'A drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface; a scribbling on an ancient wall, as of those at Pompeii and Rome.' Curiously, the second usage that it records is even more technical: 'also, a method of decoration in which designs are produced by scratches through a superficial layer of plaster, glazing, etc., revealing a ground of different colour.' And that is it. In Classics and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, as well as in the much younger field of Egyptology (in which three of the editors of this volume received their training), when graffiti were collected, this was always alongside other inscriptions – being often, or even usually, seen as inferior to other inscriptional forms. Although the Pompeian context for the invention of the term is often forgotten, it nevertheless seems to have imprinted itself on the way such material, including poems, was perceived: 'proof positive of a lack of education, intelligence, or taste' (Milnor 2014: vii). If textual graffiti are the second-class citizens of the epigraphic tradition, in Classics, Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Egyptology at least, then pictorial graffiti are the third class. This should make us reflect upon the importance that our society, and the scholarly community in particular, arbitrarily ascribes to the written word. Indeed, this is the very same highly literate and educated society that has recently started to understand, and therefore accept and even appreciate, the artistic and social value of figurative street art, as opposed to the calligraphic arts of the *writers*, which remain largely cryptic to our eyes.

The comic power of the sequence from *Monty Python's Life of Brian* is rooted in the very same anachronisms with which any scholarly work on graffiti must engage. Brian's graffiti, with their messages of protest from the occupied, colonised and oppressed subjects, play with the idea that graffiti offer immediate access to what 'real' people really felt and thought. The idea that graffiti are second-class sources – Brian cannot even conjugate Latin properly – reinforces the widespread assumption that a text on a wall necessarily belongs to a 'lower', if not semi-literate, culture. Graffiti appear in places that are unexpected to us, where we think they should not be, where we believe they do not belong. There is an intuitive notion of defacement and unacceptability linked to graffiti, ancient or not. This is mainly modern and Western in origin and is based on a particular definition of (high) culture that belongs first and foremost on paper (including a computer screen), whether or not it is then displayed on a wall.

Nowadays, such a misconception is maintained by a widespread lack of understanding of contemporary graffiti, which tends to be flattened and reduced, as a whole, to the subversive and provocative aspects of their assumed rationale. Graffiti originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s from the street movements of marginalized groups of young African- and Latin Americans in the suburbs of New York and Philadelphia as a way to claim

freedom of expression and ownership of the streets (Daniell 2011). It is often forgotten when talking about modern graffiti – and this is a key aspect – that they are the *graphic* form of the hip-hop phenomenon; the latter started as a way to denounce segregation and abuse and through which to find other forms of expression in music (rap and DJing) and dance (b-boying or breakdancing) (Dal Lago and Giordano 2016: 77). Although this is no place to discuss the origins and evolution of hip-hop, its multifaceted forms must be taken into account when looking at graffiti from past societies, given that the latter are likely to be the only relics of a more complex socio-cultural system which included other, ephemeral but no less powerful or important, forms of expression of which no other trace has survived.

Almost 50 years after the appearance of the first graffiti in New York, this phenomenon has inevitably evolved into something different. Transported from the United States to Europe and the rest of the world in the 1980s, graffiti, as a language or code, has been translated, reinterpreted and adapted to new needs, communities and spaces. Some still maintain their original fighting spirit – if perhaps weakened – against oppression and the discrimination against minorities. Others have evolved from a form of social protest into something less political which is more attentive to its artistic expression and technical execution. Many graffitiists today have received formal training at art schools, and see the street as an effective and affordable way to make their work more visible and acquire notoriety. Graffiti, a term that is mostly rejected by the community of street artists and writers, is being largely co-opted by high-culture. Even if its original fighting spirit has somewhat diminished, one of its peculiarities has remained unchanged: its power to engage with the community, to be ‘out there’, accessible to everyone at the (not infrequent) risk of being defaced and deleted.

The Italian art historian and critic Franco Speroni, talking on 9th April 2016 about graffiti at a conference on street art organized by the Treccani Encyclopaedia, defines them as expressions of ‘connected individualities’, that is, manifestations of individualities that connect to one another to form a web of relations.⁴ The connective quality of graffiti has not gone unnoticed, and some of the local councils, which had once waged war against wall-writers, are now commissioning street artists to socially reconnect marginalized suburbs or *non-places* – places that ‘cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity’ (Augé 1995: 77–8) – with their cities.

Graffiti are becoming a fashionable and profitable phenomenon, one that increasingly appeals to the masses. In this, which is considered by many artists as drifting towards the corruption of original artistic values, there is still room for political and social engagement. This is exemplified by the work which Davide Salvadei (an Italian artist better known as Eron) created in 2015 for *The Bridges of Graffiti* exhibition at the Biennale in Venice.⁵ On the

white, untouched wall of the gallery the artist created the illusion of a decrepit surface onto which, from a cloud of smoke, emerges the profile of a pianist absorbed in his music. The rusty writing in capital letters at the top reads 'THE WORLD'S FUTURES'. A QR code next to it gives access to a video of the same man playing the piano. Yet, instead of being a jazz player performing in a concert hall, the man appears to be playing in the middle of a crumbling street, surrounded by devastated rolling shutters and buildings in ruins. The words 'Yarmouk', 'peace', 'world', and 'future' are added digitally to the surface of some of the ruins in the background, a sort of virtual graffiti. The man, a Palestinian-Syrian named Ayham Ahmed, plays the piano in Yarmouk, a Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus which has experienced the devastation of civil war. His piano gives hope to the children and adults of his desperate community. Ayham's music, like many graffiti in other parts of Syria,⁶ screams to a world that watches and shrugs its shoulders that they too have the right to exist. Eron's work picks up Ayham's message, powerfully, creating a bridge between *them* and *us*. This piece of art condenses the complexity of graffiti, both contemporary and ancient, as socially connective and multi-layered forms of communication that are complementary to the spoken word, music, dance, drama and all other evanescent modes of expression, but which still need to be considered.

Our appraisal of culture from ancient times tends to consider expression outside this traditional space as marginal, when it is in fact an organic part of a society's cultural expression at large. Quite paradoxically, the same normative, centralised high-culture can end up co-opting 'subversive' graffiti and turning them into expensive artefacts (e.g. those created by Banksy).

In past societies, as well as in some modern ones, graffiti can also be – and often are – a socially acceptable means of communication, self-definition and space appropriation. The restored three-dimensionality of the contemporary graffiti phenomenon, with all its layers of tangible and ephemeral stratifications, contributes a more balanced approach to the graffiti of past societies, nuancing the idea of a sharp dichotomy between modern graffiti as illicit and marginal, and ancient ones as being a universally accepted cultural practice.

The position taken by the writers of this book was to give serious attention to all aspects of graffiti, not simply their semantic content. For a long time, graffiti have been treated primarily as textual sources, ignoring their context, aesthetics, pictorial elements and the practices to which they bear witness, with the result that their specificity is discounted and they are considered simply as a subcategory of historical inscriptions (epigraphy).

By mapping the great variety of graffiti practices, forms and registers, this book may tend to blur still further the definition of a graffiti. The features of graffiti must be thought of as a qualitative spectrum rather than an

ensemble of clear-cut characteristics, as much in antiquity as today.

Common paths and threads of discussion: graffiti as social and cultural practices

Rather than describing what graffiti *are* or what they *mean*, this book seeks to demonstrate what graffiti *do*. The case studies open up diverse paths on the act of inscribing, but several threads emerge that can be followed from one chapter to another.

Graffiti can be defined contextually and materially: they are inscribed on a surface or other medium and within a particular spatial or environmental context. As such, they belong to epigraphy. However, as they are more often scratched than incised or carved, they also are associated with handwriting: the direct inscription of surfaces and spaces by living individuals. Just like ‘posies’ – poems written on objects in Elizabethan England – graffiti are ‘pieces of writing with physical extension’, which ‘cannot exist as text in the abstract’ (Fleming 2001: 43).

This opens up the recurrent question of the margin and marginality, whether on a monument or on a page. However integral to the cultural production of their time, graffiti have a definitive and even existential link to margins. As such, marginalia proper (annotations in the margins of books and manuscripts) are addressed here in their relationship to the paradigm of graffiti (Rogers and Jahjah in this volume). A proposal was made to define graffiti as secondary epigraphy, (i.e. inscriptions that do not belong to their medium in its original state, whether built or open, but redefine it (e.g. Frood 2010; Ragazzoli 2013). In such a framework, graffiti are additions, penetrating what they comment on, discuss, adorn and deface: they alter the balance and centres of gravity of the original. Starting from the edges, they end up reworking it from within (Stern in this volume). In some cases, graffiti are not secondary to the monument: they produce the monument that is to be visited (e.g. Ragazzoli in this volume). What was on the monument becomes the monument itself (Harmanşah in this volume). Thus graffiti not only relate to space but also, in many instances, they create it. They establish territories by reshaping and redefining sites, answering a natural impetus for humans to appropriate their environment symbolically. A theme that emerges in one chapter after another is that of instances of graffiti left by members of professional communities who appropriate and shape their daily places of work in this way (e.g. Navratilova in this volume).

In that sense, graffiti participate in the logic of cultural appropriation and are a way for individuals or communities, whether considered legitimate or not, to appropriate both a space and registers of expression (e.g. Olton in this volume). Appropriation is a complex process, which can take multiple forms and by ‘which spaces, objects, and other “cultural expressions” are

brought to represent something different from their original purposes' (Ashley and Plesch, 2002: 6). As a result, graffiti activate an inherent tension between the public and the private as they redefine and reshape public or semi-public spaces and objects for the benefit of private individuals or communities. Graffiti set into motion strategies of appropriation, through which individuals can impose their individuality on official buildings and forms of expression that are imposed on them by authorities (Giard 1990: xlv–xlv). It may be argued that questions of opposition or criticism are secondary in respect of graffiti, yet they are inherently subversive, in the original meaning of the term, as they reshape their environment. Hence graffiti are also about power. This is blatantly apparent with modern graffiti, but can also be seen in historical graffiti. In her foreword to *This is Modern Art*, Lisa Yun Lee writes that Idris Goodwin and Kevin Coval's play is 'about a crime committed on February 21, 2010, when a graffiti crew [tag] bombed the Renzo Piano Modern Wing of the Art Institute of Chicago. The play is about more than just this particular art crime, however. It is also about an on-going kind of crime perpetrated by the powerful against those in the margins, a more universal history of oppression that takes place through the prescription of what is beautiful.' (Lee 2016: 7).

Since the subject of traditional epigraphy remains dominated by more impersonal, official and formal inscriptions, graffiti or secondary epigraphy still tend to be seen as more personal, not necessarily sanctioned by official authorities, and informal, although they may emulate formal registers. When an official inscription is commissioned, it uses formal and codified rules and is often authorized explicitly or implicitly by the authorities who govern the space in question. Graffiti may bear witness to how consumers receive this official decorum, often springing from individual initiatives and giving their authors a way to express themselves in a public place. In the following chapters, several authors compare graffiti to social media, such as Twitter or Facebook. In all these instances, wall writing – whether concrete or virtual – is socially interactive; it creates and reinforces shared identities and displays the need to create links through self-presentation. The inscriptions left by Egyptian scribes of the second millennium BC registered their social identity as members of a very specific social world (see Ragazzoli in this volume); young ecological activists involved in the Gezi Park demonstrations in Istanbul created a common identity and a shared feeling of belonging through their graphic protests on nearby walls (Gruber in this volume), just as the revolutionary artists of Cairo did in the streets adjacent to Tahrir Square in 2011 (e.g. Gröndahl 2012).

Graffiti can often be decoded as the display of individual and collective experiences in a monumental context. They raise the question of how individuals relate to their social environment, how they fashion a distinctive experience of the world that they have inherited. Graffiti give expression to distinct and alternative voices (see Olton in this volume).

A number of graffiti in Pompeii echo banquets and receptions at noble villas and display toasts to the host and his guests (see Benefiel in this volume); in the Maya palaces at Tikal, they record the ruling elite's participation in, and the reception of, official celebrations (see Olton in this volume). Pieter Saenredam's painting *The Interior of the Buurkerk at Utrecht* (1644) shows the spacious interior of the church where people stroll, converse and leave the odd drawing or signature on the walls. In his *Bentvueghels in a Roman Tavern* (c. 1626) Roeland van Laer depicts a boisterous gathering of wild and fairly inebriated young artists, busily writing on the walls. While such images belong to the Renaissance, when artists used their signatures on works of arts and monuments to 'enact the past within their present' (Guichard 2014, 57), an ancient Greek water vessel shows a woman being entertained by a flute player while another servant scribbles on a door (Langner 2001: figs 43–4). What these images have in common are the social occasions presiding over the inscription of graffiti. Most of the graffiti and inscriptions mentioned in this volume appear typically in clusters, and can express group cohesion as well as social competition. As a social and performative activity, graffiti both register and constitute social interactions: they create a dialogue with their reader, instigating an injunction to answer the 'and-me' phenomenon that may explain why clustering is a key aspect of graffiti throughout cultures (e.g. Macdonald in this volume).

It appears, then, that the definition of 'a graffito' as an event is productive in understanding the whole spectrum of meaning and the social practices of which any single graffito is the trace. This invites us to think of graffiti as performance, implying writers and an audience, a relation to space. They record and create paths in the landscape, like those of the Coptic monks in the Theban Mountain near modern Luxor during the Byzantine and early Islamic period (see Delattre in this volume).

Yet graffiti are an open form of communication. In that sense, graffitists address an open audience that may survive them – all the more so if their graffiti are copied down and collected in books. Several chapters in this volume illustrate that paper can be a more durable medium than concrete walls when it comes to addressing posterity or ensuring survival in social memory (e.g. Dudbridge in this volume). Therefore, secondary and marginal inscriptions can be used as an especially effective – even magical – form of writing. A way of communicating with posterity, they can also be used to address, petition or thank those in higher authority. Linked to this performative nature of graffiti is their transience: the act of leaving a graffito is important in itself as a gesture (see Navratilova in this volume), a performance before an audience, an act of communication that may fade soon after. Their authors may well be aware of this ephemerality, making their inscriptions somehow even more special. Thus, graffiti can be examined within the framework of the anthropology of writing and

performativity (thanksgiving, offering, *ex voto*, etc.). They use walls and spaces recognized for their efficiency, liminal spaces in a church or a tomb, or one where the presence of graffiti in itself creates and indicates such power, attracting more graffiti in their turn (e.g. Delattre in this volume).

Many of the graffiti considered here are textual, raising questions about their relationship to their textual environment. The individual regimes of literacy and text production to which they belonged were very different from those we are familiar with today, ours being one of high literacy rates and mechanically reproduced texts. Ancient societies were paper-short and did not always hold white walls to be sacred. Within the specific paradigms for written expression thus created, graffiti must be considered as inherent to the written culture of their own time. Furthermore, in a culture of handwriting, writing on a wall is closely equivalent to publication; that is, the act of making something generally known. As such, graffiti testify to the production and diffusion of literary culture within a given society. Works on posies in Elizabethan England or on the short epigrams incised on the walls of Pompeii reveal them to be original creations organic to the literary landscape of the time, rather than mere attempts to reproduce ‘real’ literature (Fleming 2001; Milnor 2014). Social competition as well as the need for self-commemoration must have constituted a strong impetus for wall writing in certain milieux. Texts from graffiti belong to a specific ‘regime of inscription’ (Van Damme 2012) and cannot be discarded because of the surface upon which they are inscribed.

Looking at graffiti within the framework of the literacy of the time raises broader questions of their social and symbolic impact. In many of the societies represented in this book, literacy was a privilege restricted to the elite. Writing on the wall in such a context can be part of elite display, but this does not mean that all graffiti are expressions of the upper echelons of society and that none come from lower classes.

From landscapes to the written page

This collection attempts to put forward a comprehensive approach to graffiti as a cultural practice of inscription. Such an approach may play a key role in identifying such a crucial aspect of human engagement with the material world. The three sections of this book discuss historical graffiti in landscape and cityscape; within buildings and monuments; and finally on the written page. However, some chapters speak to more than one of these contexts. Many examine the relationship between the various acts of inscription and their spatial/material context.

Section 1 surveys graffiti in landscapes. Chapters in this section collectively investigate graffiti in geological places, remote corners of the countryside, highlands and lowlands and, in one case, within the chaotic world of a modern cityscape (the Gezi Park graffiti in Istanbul, see Gruber in

this volume). Acts of inscription are understood as place-making practices and a form of engagement with the mineral world. This chapter links graffiti practices to scholarly debates on the production of places and territories through everyday and extraordinary practices, events and political interventions. Graffiti can be understood here as one aspect of the material traces that make up those spaces and landscapes.

Section 2 illustrates graffiti within the built environment, both public and private. It explores how graffiti witness the engagement of people with their spaces and how they can be place-making for people in the spaces in which they live or visit. Performativity is a key theme here, as well as the ways graffiti show dynamic definitions and redefinitions of space, understood as the ever-changing result of social activities and bodily agencies (the possibility to physically act in a given environment).

Section 3 fundamentally changes the perspective by discussing inscriptions and literary practices that are not, in the common sense, graffiti, but are influenced both in content and form by graffiti practices or by practices that have defining features in common with graffiti. This section illustrates the similarities between graffiti and other literate practices, including the transmission on paper of graffiti from other contexts that are now lost, or graffiti that project onto walls forms and content borrowed from written pages. The section also explores the idea that, in terms of dialogue with the environment, graffiti set in play processes similar to the notes and comments inscribed in the margins of manuscripts, printed books and even e-documents.

Section One

Graffiti and the Landscape

Introduction: Graffiti and the Landscape

Ömür Harmanşah

The contributions in the following section investigate the relationship between landscapes and graffiti, including both urban and rural landscapes as well as geological places, which often act as provocative and inspiring sites of inscription. We understand landscapes in the broadest sense of the term, as environments of human engagement with the world; a constellation of meaningful places that are linked by movements, trajectories and networks; or territories and ecologies where nature/culture collapse. In the contemporary world, from paleoclimatologists to landscape historians, from survey archaeologists to place-oriented geographers, landscapes are studied as cultural artefacts and as agents of social change, in contrast to the conventional understanding of landscapes that allocate them to the status of a static, passive background (Knapp and Ashmore 1999). While social processes shape landscapes in which we dwell, landscapes condition and impact particular historical trajectories and conditions. Matthew Johnson points out that 'landscape ... is a way of seeing, a way of thinking about the physical world' (Johnson 2007: 4). In that sense, it is also a political territory where land and livelihood are negotiated in its borderlands.

The corpus of material traces within each landscape form the long-term *memory* of that landscape, while carved or scribbled inscriptions or imagery form an important part of that corpus. As John G. Evans puts it '[t]he very existence of written records is bound up with how land relates to people ... And it was not just the texts themselves, but the act of writing or engraving, the materials used, the media of presentation, and just their very existence ... that allowed expressions of sociality and articulations with people's lives' (Evans 2003: 148). If graffiti constitute one type of those practices of engaging with places through inscription or drawing as testimonies of human agency in the landscape, we must also take landscape seriously as a powerful actor, constituting the site of those practices. Texts are (part of) textures in the landscape; textures shape the visibility and the materiality of its surfaces.

Ancient Mediterranean landscapes were enchanted: they were animated with potent stories, while mountains, springs, caves, rivers or rock outcrops were worshipped as localized divinities. In the Anatolian myth of Kumarbi,

from the famous epic poem *Song of Ullikummi* known through Hittite texts from Hattuša/Boğazköy, the Hurrian god Kumarbi meets a massive rock at a ‘cold spring’ and has intercourse with it. The rock bears a child to Kumarbi and the newborn was named Ullikummi (Archi 2009). The offspring grows up to become a basalt rock monster in the shape of a sea serpent and fights with the Storm God. This animate nature of ancient landscapes can be used to understand them not as passive, neutral environments, blank slates onto which human deeds, stories, and ideologies are inscribed, but as actors and agents in their own terms. The acts of inscription of landscapes, then, are political acts of territorial claim and sovereignty, a desire for immortality, performative gestures to adhere to geological time, and a desire to link materially with the divine in those landscapes. Whether this is the alluring gneiss bedrock of the Latmos Mountain in southwest Turkey with a deep prehistory of holiness (Harmanşah, in this volume), or the evocative landscape of Istanbul with its historical neighbourhoods and weathered urban textures (Gruber, in this volume), the meaning and purpose of graffiti practices have to do with precisely this context of a potent landscape, to which the scribbling authors desire to cling.

How are landscapes inscribed? While our authors explore various historical and cultural contexts in which places and landscapes are inscribed with graffiti, they resist the notion of a timeless, unchanging environment outside everyday practices. This is an important aspect of landscapes that needs to be reiterated, otherwise we face the danger of seeing inscription as an invasive act, evoking the well-known discourse of *terra nullius* (the colonial politics of claiming and legitimizing the takeover of ‘untouched’ landscapes). When building their new fortresses across the East Anatolian and Caucasian highlands, Urartian kings of the Near Eastern Iron Ages often used in their inscriptions the phrase ‘The rock was untouched’, explicitly using the *terra nullius* discourse (Harmanşah 2013: 26).

Chloé Ragazzoli’s chapter on the Scribes’ Cave at Deir-el-Bahari in Late Bronze Age Egypt, engages with an intriguing unfinished rock-cut tomb that was treated as a cave by the staff of the local temples. This newly found naturalized space becomes their site of identity politics, a socialized space where they could express their worldviews and desires on the surfaces of the living rock. Likewise, in Michael Macdonald’s chapter, the nomads of Early and Late Roman Syria and Arabia configured the desert and urban landscapes through their Safaitic and Nabataean graffiti, and negotiated territories by inscribing boulders, funerary cairns, prominent rock outcrops near water sources and sometimes even urban monuments in a world where oral culture is powerful, poetic and dominant over literacy. In this case, these ‘signatures’ almost act like performative speech acts in the public sphere. In my own contribution, I discuss rock inscriptions in hieroglyphic Luwian at various sites in the western Anatolian peninsula in the borderlands of the Hittite Empire during the Late Bronze Age, and discuss

precisely how such practices of inscription related to the specific local landscapes and places of cultural significance, especially the holy mountains. In these rock reliefs and inscriptions, the distinction between a monument and a graffito is blurred. Alain Delattre takes us to the time of early Christianity in Egypt and investigates the intriguing corpus of Greek and Coptic graffiti on the living rock of the Theban Mountain, in public and hidden spaces which were largely reused spaces from deep antiquity. In Delattre's engaging chapter, the ruined cultural and weathered natural surfaces mix and blend with each other, sharing their context within the deeply ancient necropolis of Thebes. In all these chapters, graffiti appear in clusters within the landscape, introducing a new order of inscribed spatiality; oftentimes, this is a space of dialogue and reciprocity not only between the authors of the graffiti but also between them and their sites of inscription. Gruber's incisive chapter on the young activists of the recent Gezi movement in Turkey demonstrates how their graffiti turned Istanbul's urban landscape into a political ecology of resistance in a short, accelerated period of time during the summer of 2013. Her visual and textual analysis of the Gezi graffiti demonstrates the astounding creativity and humour of graffiti as a medium ('playful, daring, and proudly insolent'), similar to some of Ragazzoli's case studies from the Scribes' Cave or Macdonald's Safaitic graffiti on boulders in the Arabian desert. Gruber's chapter allows us to break the ice between what is sanctified by high-brow scholars as 'ancient' and what is advocated by the new, more tolerant generation as 'contemporary', letting the two meet in the intimacy, poetry, and ephemerality of graffiti. Through discussions of the graffiti inscribed at evocative landscapes, authors access a kind of voice, both creative and powerful, that brings the graffiti alive in spaces as both verbal and visual statements as well as a certain kind of bodily performance. Landscapes, both rural and urban, wild or conquered, hidden or public, can become political platforms once clusters of graffiti reconfigure spaces in times of unrest.

The Scribes' Cave: Graffiti and the Production of Social Space in Ancient Egypt circa 1500 BC

C. Ragazzoli

Graffiti have the power to turn space into meaningful places for those who appropriate them through their written testimonies. In this sense, it is possible to say that graffiti created the Scribes' Cave in the sacred spot of Deir el-Bahari, which lies close to the royal funerary temples on the West Bank of Thebes.

The graffiti studied in this chapter come from what looks to the uninitiated eye very much like a cave but is, in fact, an ancient tomb (MMA 504),¹ the excavation of which had only just started when it was abandoned at the very beginning of the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000 BC). They all date from the same period, the beginning of the 18th dynasty (c. 1500 BC), an era of renewal when royal power was reinventing itself after a long period of political unrest and division (e.g. Galán et al. 2014; Polz 2007). These graffiti are signed by members of the staff of the royal funerary temples then being built at the foot of the slope where the tomb is located (e.g. Szafrński 2014). Such unity of time and space indicates a remarkably coherent social and historical context, through which it is possible to construct a real biography of this monument. When recording these graffiti, it pays us to take careful note of their material features as well as where they were written and how they relate to one another, their audience and their authors. In this way we can understand the events to which they bear witness and the actors who took part in them. The resulting record provides a unique opportunity to explore the factors and processes at work in secondary epigraphy. It shows how such graffiti are a specific kind of writing that spills over into the categories of speech and action. These graffiti create places and reveal communities.

Ancient Egypt: an epigraphic culture

Graffiti are recorded from the origins of Ancient Egypt (Cruz-Urbe 2008; Desroches-Noblecourt 1972; Franke 2001; Peden 2001). The practice is extensive in time as well as in space: the whole territory and beyond plays host. Compared to primary inscriptions in temples and tombs, graffiti

perform a special role as they indicate interaction with the environment and the emergence of monuments; they lead to the cultural appropriation of marginal spaces, such as the deserts on both sides of the Nile Valley (Darnell 2007: 30). The practice is also inherent in Egyptian culture and literacy. Rock inscriptions and graffiti are one and the same thing in the Predynastic Period, showing that the separation of graffiti from other writing practices is primarily the result of modern modes of categorization.

Egyptian graffiti are often classified according to the location where they are found. They can also be categorized in terms of performance, context and audience. The graffiti of the Scribes' Cave may be considered as falling into several distinct, yet overlapping, categories.

Exploration and desert graffiti are without doubt the most ancient and widespread graffiti practice from Ancient Egypt (e.g. Blumenthal 1977; Darnell 2002; Darnell 2013; Goyon 1972; Tallet et al. 2012). These graffiti were posted on the landscape, along desert roads, near camps, mines and quarries. Not without some practical use – they marked a passage, the position of a route – they also had wide symbolic meaning by allowing Pharaonic culture and power to appropriate this loosely controlled natural space. The inscriptions range from crudely incised names (e.g. Tallet et al. 2012: 115, doc. 183) to beautifully laid-out offering stelae commissioned by the king (e.g. Tallet et al. 2012: 139, doc. 218). They all fit within Egyptian decorum, to use the expression introduced by Baines to Egyptology to describe the visual code defining what and how it can be shown (Baines 2007: 14–16). This first group of Egyptian graffiti point to how secondary inscriptions can appropriate natural landscapes and turn them into monuments, whilst also telling us where people travelled and how they interacted with their environments.

Temple graffiti were mainly authored by staff working within the sacred precinct of the temple (Frood 2013: 285; Jacquet-Gordon 2003: 3–4). Many date from the second part of the New Kingdom onwards (c. 1200 BC). Their content is mainly devotional and they often include the drawing of a god or depict a cultic scene such as offerings, along with the name of the dedicating/beneficiating person. Frood, who is studying such graffiti on the temple of Ptah in Karnak (modern Luxor), identifies them with 'stations' that ritualized activities as well as the daily circulation of priests, who thus expressed their power over, and bodily action within, specific spaces (Frood 2013: 294, 298–9). Temple graffiti played a significant role in the production and organization of sacred and professional space for and by its users. They both indicate and create paths within the monument, thus reshaping the temple space around some of its users.

Here, graffiti indicate a link between secondary epigraphy and individual religious expression. This became a salient feature of *piety graffiti*, which flourished from the end of the New Kingdom onwards in informal sanctuaries. In this case, graffiti functioned as ex-votos and were a way of

establishing a communication with divine entities (Plesch 2002) either to thank them or to beg them for a favour. On the wall, these graffiti usually created a contact zone between the divine and the mundane; they often appear on liminal spaces between restricted and public areas, such as the outer walls of major temples. As their effect was often to make space more sacred, they attracted more graffiti. This was the case in the ruined and abandoned temple of Thutmosis III in Deir el-Bahari, which became a popular sanctuary for the goddess Hathor during the Ramesside period (c. 1292–1069 BC), as shown by several hundred ink inscriptions (*dipinti*). They are the expression of a personal and unofficial cult in which patrons asked the goddess for her protection in a place where they hoped to be heard by her (Marciniak 1974).

Visitors' graffiti borrow from these various epigraphic categories (e.g. Helck 1952; Ragazzoli 2011a; Wildung 1975). They are literary and religious inscriptions inked within the decoration of the public and cultic areas of funerary monuments. Signed by scribes, they date to the New Kingdom. Found in the tombs of nobles within private necropolises such as Thebes (Ragazzoli 2013; 2016a), Beni Hasan (Hassan 2016) and Assiut (Verhoeven 2012), they also appear within royal funerary monuments from the past, as the chapter of Navratilova in this volume shows. Through this medium, scribes visiting the tombs could offer a prayer for the benefit of the tomb owner, but they could also exploit the magical and ritual efficacy of the tomb to their own advantage. Often made collectively, these visits point to a feeling of belonging shared by groups of scribes from the same institution, such as, in the case of Thebes, major funerary temples (Ragazzoli 2016a). These graffiti are therefore a way of allowing certain small social worlds to appropriate a common place and a common past (Ragazzoli 2013).

The graffiti within the Scribes' Cave²

The graffiti of the Scribes' Cave in Deir el-Bahari (MMA 504) share several features with the epigraphic categories described above and as part of the landscape, they appropriate a specific contact zone for the benefit of a professional community working nearby.

What was briefly to become a tomb, on the north slope of the wadi of Deir el-Bahari, would have been part of a necropolis for the high dignitaries of King Mentuhotep II (Allen 1996), whose funerary temple was built just below (see Fig. 1.1) at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. It remains unclear why the excavation of this rock-cut tomb was abandoned. It may have been started at the end of the reign and been abandoned for a better position nearer the new king, the rock may have proved too weak or its position at the very end of the slope may have been deemed inappropriate. Yet, some years later, when the site was chosen by Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut for her own funerary temple, the forgotten tomb seems to have attracted the

attention of the staff of the new temple, as the earlier monument was situated on the margin of the sacred precinct, just above its first and second terraces.

The place contains about seventy graffiti, which can mostly be dated to this period and attributed, thanks to names and titles, to members of the staff of the temple of Hatshepsut. A few later examples belong to the staff of the temple of her successor, Thutmosis III, who also built his own funerary temple in this vicinity.

The graffiti are scattered on the lateral walls, which had been smoothed by the original quarrymen, as well as on the rough limestone flakes on the ceiling. The graffiti display several graphic forms, from large inscriptions in hieroglyphs, including large figures, emulating the formal decorum of monuments – however clumsily – to cursive notes and signatures (see Fig. 1.3). The place is nowadays known locally as the ‘dirty cave’ because of two erotic graffiti. Thus, the corpus of graffiti, whilst very consistent in terms of authorship (the staff of local funerary temples) and dating (the beginning of the 18th dynasty) displays a range of graphic forms and an array of social practices, from votive actions to jokes, that reflect the richness of a social place appropriated by a particular community.

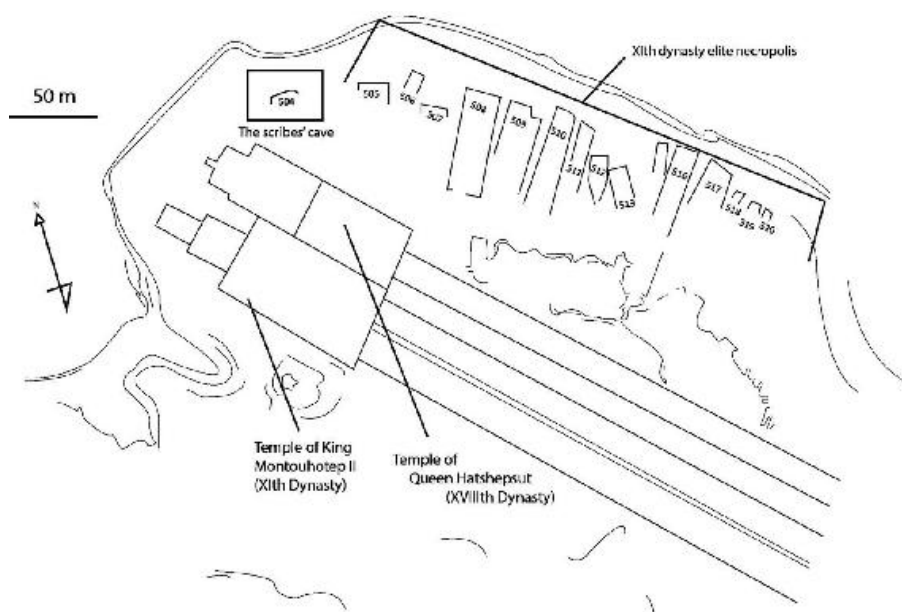


Fig. 1.1 The monuments in the Deir el-Bahari area, Western Thebes. Map by the author.

Scribal identity

This corpus of graffiti refers to a specific social world, the scribal staff of the royal funerary temples. They belong to the outer elite that worked for the

high dignitaries of the royal entourage – the inner elite. In this marginal space, these intermediate administrators found a place to fashion their social identity as well as negotiate their belonging to this community. The sociological concept of ‘social world’ developed by Strauss can usefully be applied to such a professional group (Strauss 1991). Strauss, who belonged to the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism, defined social worlds as a regularized cultural area delineated by the limits of effective communication between individuals from, for example, a given profession. This effective communication in turn establishes a shared image and identity. Such a social world is first and foremost a realm of common discourse. I consider that the graffiti in the Scribes’ Cave constitute such a shared communicational space.

The graffiti signatories built their personae around their scribal identity. Most of them sign with the title ‘scribe’ (*sešh/sekh*), promoting their literate status rather than their personal identity. Professional ties such as ‘friends’ (*khenmes*) and ‘brothers’ (*sen*), which in such a context stand for ‘colleagues’ and other professional horizontal links, are favoured in the signatures. This social world depicts itself through the idea of ‘brotherhood’, which stands here as a coherent social organization based on profession above other features of personal identities. This is clearly demonstrated in graffito P.2.12, which reads as a collective signature: ‘Scribe Neferhotep, his brother (*sen*) scribe Parehny, his brother (*sen*) Panyimen, his brother (*sen*) Huy, his friend (*khenmes*) Ptahmes, his brother (*sen*) Imenmes.’

The scribal world is also hinted at graphically in several graffiti. Whilst the larger graffiti emulate inscriptions made on monuments, they do it clumsily, for example, mixing up the orientation of hieroglyphs which betrays the fact that the authors were not trained painters but administrators whose normal writing was the cursive handwriting called hieratic. Unlike hieroglyphs, hieratic was written only from right to left and horizontally (e.g. graffito O.1.1). The cursive script used in most of the graffiti is, by contrast, a beautiful hieratic, typical of literary manuscripts. Here, the scribes have invented a monumental form of hieratic, conjuring up the world of manuscripts in an epigraphic context. This script appearing here lies outside the expectations of the Egyptian decorum and works as a sign of the social and cultural space that produced the graffiti (see Fig. 1.2). Cursive writing refers to ‘a daily practice of writing, whether administrative, literary or ritual. This therefore induces an important *pragmatic difference* between hieratic and hieroglyphics: hieratic, the line of writing, is necessarily linked to a practice’ (Donnat 2014: 230–1). Hieratic used in a monumental context works as a graphic sign – what Petrucci called a case of ‘exhibited writing’ (Petrucci 1998: 35). It stands for scribal practice, which played an important role in the self-presentation of the visitors to the cave. In the New Kingdom, a scribal literature developed in which the idea of ‘writing with one’s hand’ and ‘reading with one’s mouth’ came to personify

the scribe's identity (Ragazzoli 2011b). Such a feature distinguished them from the illiterate masses whilst setting them apart from the top elite who had scribes to take care of such practical writing for them (Wente 1967: 58, no. 67; 203, no. 330).

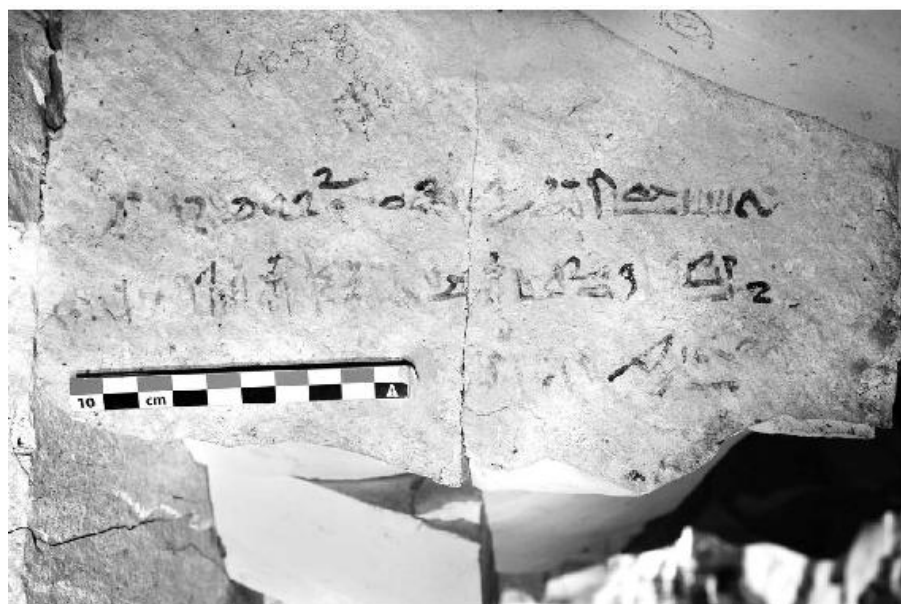


Fig. 1.2 A graffito on the ceiling of MMA 504. Photograph by the author.

Furthermore, some of the more hidden graffiti can be seen as a demonstration of scribal skills that allude directly to the world of manuscripts. Several graffiti, especially on the ceiling (see Fig. 1.2), are laid out in clear blocks of text, written in a beautiful literary hand with black ink. They are highly reminiscent of texts written on papyrus or ostraca, emblematic of the world of scribes. If one adds that the flakes of limestone on which they are written strongly suggest the limestone ostraca produced through excavation (Andreu, Pelegrin, Pariselle 2015) – as is shown both by their shape and by representations of the production of such ostraca in Egyptian tombs (Baud 1935: Fig. 110) – it seems clear that some of these graffiti clearly refer to the cultural and professional world of the authors.

The graphic performance

The corpus of graffiti from the Scribes' Cave appears as a mere collection of names and prayers when studied only as texts. When placed in relation to their space, and when the hints of the performance that presided over their inscription are brought together, individual graffiti and groups of graffiti can be fully read as events, memorialized in these inscriptions.

I mentioned above the socially connective aspect of the graffiti by which their authors both demonstrated and negotiated their belonging to a scribal and professional activity. From a pragmatic point of view, these graffiti are at a contact point between the oral and written realms. They record votive offerings or vows and dedications to various people. The large graffito inked within a drawing of a stela on the east wall is a good example (Ragazzoli 2017; Marciniak 1981). This starts off with the usual offering formula asking the king to intercede with the gods in favour of the signatory:

May the king grant offerings to Amun-Râ, lord of the thrones of the Dual Land, to Ra-Horakhty, [...] to Osiris who presides over the Western dwellers and who resides in every place, lord of Abydos, Wenennefer who presides over Hesert, and to the gods who reside in the necropolis so that they grant everything which is on their offerings table, namely a thousand of bread loaves, a thousand of oil-measures, a thousand of incense-cones, a thousand of linen-pieces, a thousand of beer-jars, a thousand of cattle-heads, a thousand of fowls and a thousand of every good thing on which a god lives, and which the sky gives, the earth fashions, the Nile brings from its well for the ka of the scribe Neferhotep...

graffito E.2.14

Graffiti are discursive in many ways, as clusters can be read as dialogues, discussions, or even disputes. The graffito continues with an appeal to the living, as do a number of public Egyptian monuments, addressing fellow scribes: 'Behold, every scribe, every pure priest, ever funerary priest, when you read this stela ...' (graffito E.2.14).

The epigraphic surface may be considered from a temporal and narrative perspective in which the graffiti are read not from a *posteriori* reasoning but in terms of the elaboration and sequences of inscriptions that together create a coherent epigraphic cluster. Prehistorians, who are used to large inscribed surfaces with no texts or self-evident discursive structure, have long used such an approach to read and understand parietal decoration (e.g. Gautier 1993). Epigraphic space – i.e. the space available for inscription – is delineated by the floor and ceiling, and by the height of the human figure, whether author or reader. In the Scribes' Cave, the space is also intersected by veins in the rock dividing the flat areas or panels that were gradually levelled out by quarrymen during the 11th dynasty. The epigraphic surface is therefore a succession of panels of roughly rectangular shape that I call 'epigraphic sections'. Each section is a space for expression regulated by a dialogue between freedom and constraint (Gautier 1993: 37): the surface may be a free space, but implicit rules have a role in the layout. A first graffito, or epigraphic unit, always tends to be placed in the centre of the free surface, obliging subsequent epigraphic units to fit into the remaining available space. This sequence of epigraphic events means that the focal point is very likely to be the centre of the panel, the first graffito that was written. With this in mind, it is possible to reconstruct a hierarchy and a chronology in the inscription of graffiti. Each panel shows the same chronology: the focal point

is made around one or two large graffiti, just as is the custom with conventional monuments. On the middle panel of the west wall (see Fig. 1.3), two large graffiti are visible in the centre (number 1 on the figure). Votive in nature, they are in the style of a monument. They are written in hieroglyphs, the sacred script of monuments, and the figure visible on the left recalls the praying owners of votive stelae. Both inscriptions are indeed of a votive nature. Less visible, situated in the residual or marginal space, a number of signatures have been inserted around these original inscriptions (number 2 on the figure). These signatures are in a relative position; secondary and peripheral, they cluster around the more substantial monumental inscriptions that emulate the traditional epigraphic discourse, whilst the secondary signatures draw on a wider graphic spectrum, including cursive scripts belonging to the handwritten register. They transform the panel into a monument to be seen, and establish a dialogue with the space, whose efficacy comes from the presence of the original graffiti. This is a core process of graffiti writing, by definition secondary writing, which enters into and interacts with a space to which a specific social signification has been given.

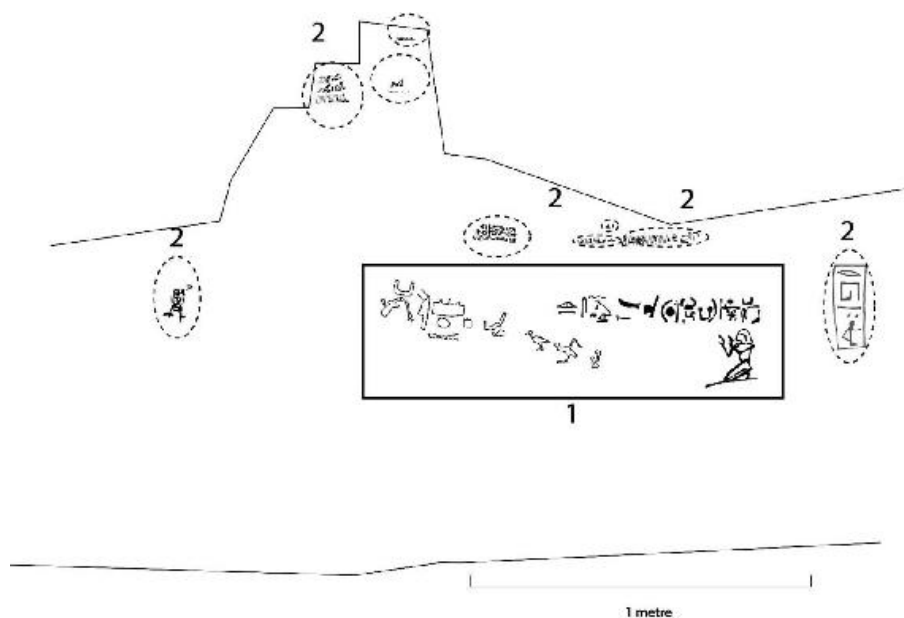


Fig. 1.3 Graffiti in the centre panel of the west wall (1: first to be inscribed; 2: second to be inscribed). Drawing by the author.

Clustering is therefore the result of a dialogue. Adding your signature often proceeded from an impetus to say ‘and-me’ (see MacDonald in this volume), by which the scribe, answering an epigraphic injunction, negotiates his belonging to and participating in the graphic community of those who had written their names in this place. Some names appear in

several places in the cave. For example, the signature of one Rehny is written in hieroglyphs in a number of places and is also hidden on the ceiling and at the very back of the tomb, as if trying to appropriate the whole space. Other graffiti are signed with several names, traced by several hands. We may assume that the visits to the cave were collective, a social occasion. Palaeographic analysis shows that at least four different hands traced the inscription on graffito P.2.12 mentioned above, which contains six different names. Graphic evidence of this sort allows us to imagine the discussion, the audience, the bustle of the crowd gathered in a small place, the writing brush passing from one hand to another, and the final appraisal of the finished composition.

A social place: worldly and divine ties

The graffiti are the only remaining traces of the events, visits and social exchanges that occurred in this place. When the tomb was cleared at the beginning of last century, the archaeologists made very few notes beyond mentioning the ceramic vessels they found there, and without even describing them. Similar material can still be found there today; considering that it is an isolated spot, high up on a steep slope, one can assume, though with no great certainty, that the beer-jars, so-called flowerpots (Czyzewska 2011: 215; Holthoer 1977: 83), that date from the beginning of the 18th dynasty, belong to cave MMA 504. Such vessels were used in this period at certain festivals both for drinking and for making offerings. We may well ask if the visits to the cave and the epigraphic activities that took place there formed part of such festivals and gatherings. The site of Deir el-Bahari was the focal point of a very important festival, the Beautiful Festival of the Valley, when the king and the people followed the procession of the god Amun from his temple of Karnak on the East Bank to the Western Mountain and the temple of Hatshepsut (Schott 1953). The procession would have made for a rich show, and the tomb was situated at a very convenient vantage point overlooking the procession both in the direction of the valley and the temple. The votive content of a number of the graffiti, including the representation of a small figure waving a palm (graffito E.2.2) – something we know was done by people taking part in a procession (Gobeil 2005) – could also hint to the attendance of such a festival.

The graffiti show how a particular social and professional group created and appropriated a place between the sacred precinct they professionally belonged to, and the Theban hinterland from which they probably came. The position of the cave allowed contact between the two realms, thus the graffiti provide evidence of a wide range of social practices.

Votive inscriptions testify to the holiness of the site and its link to the goddess Hathor, but the beneficiaries of the graffiti were the scribes themselves, who focused their ex-votos on the authorities of their social

world. These graffiti are dedicated to dignitaries such as the high priests of the funerary temples or the chief of construction work. This is the case, for example, with one of the main graffiti at the entrance, perhaps the most exposed position of all. It displays the figure of a seated dignitary who is looking towards the living world, emulating the funerary decorum and representation of the deceased in his own tomb (see Fig. 1.4). The character's features, as well as the dedication of offerings to his benefit, identify him as 'the priest Senmut', the individual in charge of all the construction work at the site of the temple of Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut.

Whilst this spot may have been a devotional place or a sanctuary, its beneficiaries were first and foremost members of a specific community of intermediary staff who created a feeling of belonging through their allegiance to the patron of their social worlds. They paid homage to eminent people and to the authorities, a kind of corporatist devotion well attested for at this period (Ragazzoli 2016b), but they left signatures and names to benefit themselves, counting on their colleagues to read and reactivate these inscriptions.



Fig. 1.4 Entrance of the tomb, west wall. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 1.5 Middle panel, east wall. Photograph by the author.

The social dialogue within this world of peers and fellow scribes also includes humour, which is above all else a form of human communication. The site is known locally as the ‘dirty cave’ because of two erotica, one of which shows a woman wearing a crown having sexual intercourse with a male partner. Although there is no foundation to the suggestion that it represents Hatshepsut with her close counsellor Senmut, the satirical content of the scene is beyond doubt: the crowned woman is in a position that contradicts all the rules of Egyptian decorum. Another scene, which represents a dignitary with an erect phallus, seems to mirror the dignitary behind whom it is painted, only in a less dignified manner.

Such imagery belongs to the scribal culture of the time, where scenes of social inversion and pornographic jokes are common (Houlihan 2001: 121–38; Manniche 1997; Vernus 2013). They are evidence first and foremost of social communication within a community that shared the same humour and the same culture. Such sexual representations are ‘multivalent signifiers’ (Meskell and Joyce 2003: 95–127) and can stand for masculinity, fertility and creation. In particular, they celebrate a dominant male culture (Parkinson 2008: 122–3) in which the scribes who visited the tomb participated fully.

Conclusion

The collection of writings and drawings in the Scribes’ Cave has created a social space and preserved an image of the community that visited and

appropriated this particular place. The cave did not have a unique or exclusive function – whether votive or social or recreational – but its various uses, and the epigraphic testimonies it contains, tell us something of the scribes who used it: piety did not exclude humour; sacred love did not exclude profane desires. The range of graffiti present may confuse the categories familiar to modern scholars, but close inspection shows that they are consistent with human society – complex and varied as it invariably is.

These graffiti are just the tangible traces, the tip of the iceberg, of other transient social activities, such as the participation in a religious feast, the dedication of votive inscriptions or the sharing of erotic jokes. They record ephemeral gestures and performances and they are integrative to the culture and forms of expression of the social world of those who inscribed the graffiti – here the staff of the local funerary temples. These flimsy and fragile dipinti and incisions have altered the monument and added new layers to it. They have changed this place from one where the scribes could watch over the landscape at a religious festival into a place to be seen for itself.

Christian Graffiti in Egypt: Case Studies on the Theban Mountain

Alain Delattre*

Similar to other provinces of the Roman Empire, Egypt became progressively Christian during the fourth century AD and the Arabic conquest in the seventh century AD did not directly affect the religious landscape of Christian Egypt. In the centuries following the Christianization of Egypt, pilgrims, visitors or local people, whether laymen or clerics, covered the walls of monuments and the rocks in the mountains with inscriptions. Hundreds of Christian graffiti from Egypt have been published so far, but thousands remain unpublished. They are mainly written in Greek and Coptic, but a few have also been carved in Arabic and Syriac. Most date back to the sixth to the eighth centuries: the period in which Christianity was flourishing in Egypt. Graffiti were usually written in public spaces, such as churches and monasteries, but some were also carved in Pharaonic temples, tombs and even in landscapes.

As in other periods and areas, Christian graffiti in Egypt can be challenging for the very definition of what an epigraphic text is. Writing on stone gives a long-term visibility and publicity to the text (e.g. funerary stelae, which were designed to keep alive the memory of deceased people forever). Most graffiti were usually quickly scratched and not painted. This could indicate that they were not planned in advance, suggesting they had a more limited purpose. They were probably often the results of impulsive acts, which might be understood as attempts to keep a record of some event (a visit to a sacred place, a testimony of piety or even simply a way to say 'I exist'). In this regard, considering the place where the graffiti were written is essential to understanding them properly. Usually, the text is written in a visible place, so it could be read by the greatest number of people.

Graffiti often appear in clusters, creating virtual dialogues between successive inscriptions. Clusters of Christian graffiti reveal an engagement with the landscape in connection with a landmark, such as tombstones or sacred places – in other words, sites which had cultural significance. Yet they could also be written in remote and hidden places. A typology cannot exist without taking into account the places and contexts of inscription, the textual content of these graffiti being only one element among others.

In terms of content, most of the texts ask the reader to pray for the author or to keep his memory alive. One can also find invocations to God and the saints, as well as requests for blessing or protection. From time to time, Biblical quotations, as well as creeds and even writing exercises, were carved onto walls. They can also be very short, limited to a single name, or a single cross, which makes their meaning difficult to grasp.

Christian remains in the Theban area

During the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods, the ancient royal necropolis on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes was largely occupied by Christians.¹ A great church was erected in the second court of the temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu (on and around which the town of Jeme was built). Ancient monuments in the Theban Mountain, such as Deir el-Bahari or the Ptolemaic temple of Deir el-Medina, were reused as monasteries or churches. Ancient tombs, mainly on the hill of Sheyk Abd-el-Gurnah, were taken over by monks in semi-anchoretic communities. A lot of graffiti were scratched or painted on the walls there.² Many others were written in the open air, directly on the mountain rocks where the surface is suitable (in some places the surface is too fragile and irregular). Facsimiles of most of these texts are available, usually without translation or study (Černý et al. 1969–79).³ Since 2004, a team has been working on collecting and studying the graffiti in the southern and western sectors of the Theban Mountain, where the monuments are scarce but which have provided no fewer than 250 inscriptions (Delattre, Lecuyot and Thirard 2008).

Nearly all the inscriptions in the Theban area were written in Coptic by visitors or local people and appear usually in clusters in connection with some architectural element, such as the remains of a shelter, but one can also find them along some paths. In a few locations, there are up to seventy inscriptions within a few square metres. It is often quite difficult to date these texts precisely. The earliest ones could maybe date back to the sixth century, but the vast majority are from the seventh and eighth centuries.

I will focus on three groups of graffiti from the Theban Mountain, which show local people or pilgrims leaving short personal testimonies on the rocks. In some cases, the texts show social competition between local people, while others commemorate a pilgrimage by visitors or, in the case of cryptographic texts, challenge the definition of graffiti.

Social competition in the Theban area

At the crossroad of two paths, near the ‘Station du Col’, which served as a temporary settlement for the workers of the royal tombs during the New Kingdom (sixteenth–eleventh century BC), one finds a cluster of Greek and

Coptic inscriptions. Two groups of texts are of special interest (Delattre 2003). Four texts were written by someone named Patermoute. In the first inscription, he presents himself as *Patermoute, the reader of the catholic church of Jeme* (inscr. 2724a; Fig. 2.1). At the same place, the same text is repeated, but the inscription was apparently left unfinished (inscr. 2722b), which would suggest it was a first attempt to write the text. A further inscription gives just his name (inscr. 2725), while a final graffito mentions him as *Patermoute, the deacon* (inscr. 2723; Fig. 2.2). These four texts can be compared to a graffito from the same area which has already been published (Spiegelberg 1921: 70 and 169): *Patermoute, the humble deacon of the catholic church of Jeme*. All these inscriptions refer to the same Patermoute, who was first reader and then deacon of the cathedral church in Jeme: he apparently came along this path regularly and wanted to inform the passers-by on this frequented crossroad of every new step in his career. It is not clear whether these inscriptions are to be interpreted as some form of boasting or merely as an attempt to be remembered. Due to a Coptic papyrus contract from Jeme dating to the middle of the seventh century that mentions Patermoute, these graffiti can be dated contemporaneously.⁴



Fig. 2.1 Graffiti of Patermoute (inscr. 2724a; 12 × 26 cm), near the Station du Col. © CEDAE.



Fig. 2.2 Graffiti of Patermoute (inscr. 2723; 7 × 34 cm), near the Station du Col. © CEDAE.

A similar pattern is found in another group of inscriptions from the same place. Four graffiti mention Horsîêsios, who was probably active, according to prosopographical data, in the first half of the eighth century. The first

(inscr. 2730) reads: *I am Horsiêsios, the deacon, I went to Saint Ammônios, 12th Pauni of the fifteenth indiction.* Saint Ammonios is to be identified with a small chapel installed in the tomb of Ramesses IV in the Valley of the Kings. In order to commemorate this visit he wrote the graffito on his way back to Jeme. On the same day, he scratched another text (inscr. 2724b): *I am Horsiêsios, the humble deacon of the holy Theotokos Maria, pray for me please, may God guide me according to His will. 12th Pauni of the fifteenth indiction.* Later on, the 28th of Tybi of the third indiction, probably three years later, he wrote a new inscription, in which he presents himself as a priest (inscr. 2726): *I am Horsiêsios, the priest of the Theotokos Maria. 28th Tubi of the third indiction.* Finally, probably during the first or second visit, two of Horsiêsios' disciples Germanos and Anastasios also left a text (inscr. 2727). Here, again, we see a local man passing through the same place, and scratching in the stone the progression of his ecclesiastical career. This second example of Horsiêsios and his disciples also shows that writing a graffiti can be a social activity performed as part of a group.

The journey of a Coptic priest in the Theban Mountain

Sometime in the sixth or the seventh century, *Papa John* from the village of Titkooh, located near the monastery of Bawit in Middle Egypt, came to the Theban area. He was probably a priest, as the epithet *Papa* suggests, when he wrote some graffiti on various rocks in the south and west valleys. Six texts mention his name, title and origin (*Papa John, the man from Titkooh*), sometimes with a short prayer addressed to Jesus, asking for help or protection (inscr. 2891, 2904, 3682, 3966 and two previously unpublished graffiti). Three texts are written in quite remote places: one along a path (inscr. 3966) and two near the remains of a small shelter (one of which is cryptographic) (unpublished) – all of which have been intentionally destroyed. Two are scratched near a little cavity cut in the rock, 1 metre wide and a metre-and-a-half deep (inscr. 2891 and 2904 [see Fig. 2.4]); one of them is clearly visible, the other written in a shadowy corner. In this place, more than seventy Christian graffiti were written on the rock walls, mainly at the left of the entrance, where the ground is flat. The numerous potsherds on the ground show that this was some sort of meeting place, where people stopped on their way to eat and drink.⁵ It might even have been a kind of chapel or an oratory (?) (Fig. 2.3).

The last graffiti were written among many others near a little hermitage, nearly at the top of the hill of the Valley of the Queens. There *Papa John* scratched a graffito three metres above ground level, making his text difficult to see (inscr. 3682). John's texts are unusual in many respects: firstly, they were written in four different places (individuals usually write their name in the same place); secondly, some of them are not easily legible because they are either cryptographic texts, written in the shadow or too

high; thirdly, the script of the texts is quite particular: it is a calligraphic script, with curved letters (*mu*) and ornaments (on letters *rho*, *tau* and *ti*). This kind of handwriting is normal in manuscripts, but not in graffiti. These are usually written with angular and somewhat imprecise letters, due to the difficulty in writing on stone. The materiality of the graffiti reveals something of John's identity: by showing off his scribal skills, the priest presents himself as a literate person.



Fig. 2.3 Small chapel or oratory (?) in the south valley. © Guy Lecuyot.

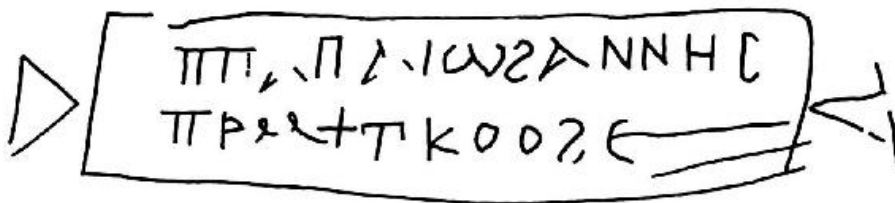


Fig. 2.4 Graffiti of John from Titkoooh (inscr. 2904; 3 × 16 cm), near the chapel or oratory (?) in the south valley. Photo and drawing by Alain Delattre.

Moreover, the presence of a priest from Titkoooh in the Theban area is intriguing. Why did he make a journey of several hundred miles? Graffiti written near the oratory (?) give perhaps provides a clue: one recognizes his characteristic hand in a few texts written near the oratory (?): these are names of people from Middle Egypt, such as *brother Anoup, the man from Tespania* (inscr. 2906; Fig. 2.5),⁶ or from the surroundings of Thebes, such as *Apa Phoibammon, the man of Sbeht* (inscr. 2910a).⁷

From these inscriptions and others at the same place, we can suppose that John was travelling from Middle Egypt with several people. Presumably, it was his writing abilities made him the best person to write for the others who wanted to leave their names. Scriptor and author are then different in these texts and it was perhaps a common practice to commission graffiti. Where we also find graffiti recording more than one name, we can assume the graffiti artist wrote his own name and then that of his friend or relative.

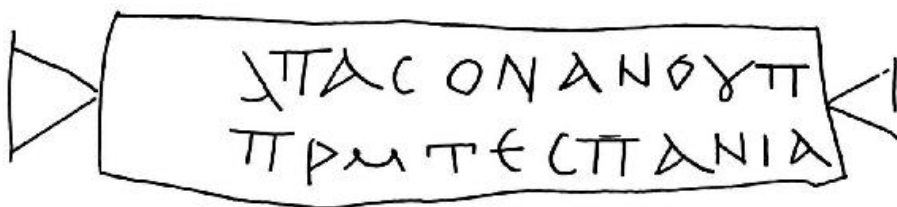


Fig. 2.5 Graffiti of Anoup from Tespania (inscr. 2906; 3 × 14.5 cm), near the chapel or oratory (?) in the south valley. Photo and drawing by Alain Delattre.

At the same place, we also find some texts from people who went there to accomplish ‘a labour for the Lord’, a spiritual work or a pilgrimage. It would be tempting to link these inscriptions with the men from Middle Egypt. But in any case, what was the purpose of their journey? If these people were pilgrims, what did they visit? The Theban area had no special reputation in the religious sphere. The only saint for whom we have some evidence in the area is Saint Ammonios (Delattre 2008). He was honoured in the Valley of the Kings in the tomb of Ramesses IV, where we find a graffiti in his honour and a depiction of him in prayer, painted in red (Baillet 1926: LXXII). He is also shown as *orans* (person at prayer with arms outstretched) in the small oratory in the south valley, where an invocation to him has been written.

Although the small chapel in the tomb of Ramesses IV was visited, as we have seen with Horsiêsius' text this modest place was neither attractive enough nor famous enough to be the focus of a pilgrimage from Middle Egypt. The reasons remain unknown.

Cryptography and hidden texts

Usually, graffiti are written in open spaces and can even be conspicuous, in order to give them maximum publicity. However, from time to time, one also encounters some hidden graffiti.

In the tomb of Ramesses IV in the Valley of the Kings, just next to the representation of Ammonios referred to above, a long inscription left by someone called Jacob (Winlock and Crum 1926: 19; Delattre 2008) contains an enigmatic sentence: *I have hidden some words as with a veil and I informed my brothers. [They tell] me that this thing is not good ... I have written them with zeal and well, but God knows that I did not know ... the power of the words that I have hidden.* The editor thought this might allude to a cryptogram. One could propose to link this text with a graffito scratched along the path to Deir el-Bahari, around 200 metres from the Valley of the Kings (inscr. 2590): *I am Jacob ... pray for me please. Saint Apa Ammôn, the saint martyr.* This text is written in the Byzantine cryptographic system, in which the alphabet is divided into three rows of nine letters, which are permuted ($\alpha = \theta$, etc.) (Doresse 1991). Above it, two lines are written in the normal way: *I am Jacob, pray for me*, and perhaps these lines were added later. It is quite tempting to identify the two Jacobs as one person: the two texts are written in the same area, by someone named Jacob, and both mention Saint Ammonios; the first contains an allusion to a cryptogram and the second one is cryptographic. It would suggest also that cryptographic writings were sometimes unpopular due to being valued as social unacceptable.

Besides the already mentioned inscription of *Papa John* near the shelter, we find a few cryptograms in the Theban area. Near the oratory, the inscription of the deacon Theopistos (inscr. 2888) is written near the hidden one by John. And at the same place, but much more visible, the signature of Abraham is written twice in this way around the normal form of his name (inscr. 2921;8 Fig. 2.6).



Fig. 2.6 Cryptographic graffiti of Abraham (inscr. 2921; 5 × 5 cm) near the chapel or oratory (?) in the south valley. Photo and drawing by Alain Delattre.

These cryptographic inscriptions raise two questions: why did someone write using the cryptographic system; and why, in some cases, did they give a clue to the reader, as in the inscription of Abraham or the one of Jacob? On the one hand we can compare this use of the cryptography in graffiti with cryptographic texts in papyri and ostraca of the region. Cryptography appears in these texts to be a kind of intellectual exercise or a joke, sometimes used in letters. In other words, the aim was not to hide the message, since the text was sent to somebody who was able to read it and contained no sensible information, but to demonstrate that the writer was learned enough to use cryptography. On the other hand, we also have evidence that the cryptograms were perhaps not always popular, as implied by Jacob's inscriptions, which notes that cryptography 'is not good', and that he is sorry for that.

If we come back to the six inscriptions of *Papa John*, one would see three clearly visible graffiti. The others are either cryptographic, hidden or written at a height of three metres (perhaps to make it less visible?). As indicated above, the two inscriptions near the shelter were destroyed and this does not appear to be recent. It is possible that the texts were erased in

antiquity, maybe even when John was in the area. Would this explain why he twice left hidden inscriptions (cryptographic and written in shadow)? Perhaps the remoteness of these graffiti are just a way to surprise a passer by who will find and read them and perhaps give them more symbolic value.

Conclusions

The Christian graffiti of the Theban area, despite often being extremely brief, allow precious insights into religious and social life in sixth- to eighth-century Egypt. The three case studies presented here show how graffiti are part of the landscape: clusters of up to seventy inscriptions are found near an oratory, a hermitage or at a crossroads. These places had a religious and social importance that was reinforced by the presence of graffiti. However, some texts were written in remote areas or in cryptographic script: this perhaps added value to the inscription both by surprising the reader, and presenting the author as an ingenious person, while the calligraphic handwriting of some texts lent them a cultural value. Finally, the Theban graffiti allow us to see the social implications of writing a name or a short text on the rocks. The author of a graffito is often not alone: passing by with others he can write both for himself and for his companions. Sometimes, he comes back, after several years, to write a new graffito in the same place. Writing graffiti seems to be itself a social act. The study of these Theban graffiti is still preliminary, and further research, should shed more light onto this phenomenon.

* I thank the editors for their comments on a previous version of this text.

Graffiti or Monument? Inscription of Place at Anatolian Rock Reliefs

Ömür Harmanşah

'The narrative wall is at once both writing and reading. As such it functions as both witness and testimony.'

Louise Höjer 2008: 243

Introduction: monuments and graffiti

Regardless of whether they are ancient or modern, graffiti locate themselves in a realm of transgression and marginality, while at the same time they communicate resilience and hope. The material practice of inscription transforms a place into an eventful site of bodily presence as well as a site of desire and futurity, by making a clandestine imprint and performing some form of hailing for future witnesses and for an anonymous solidarity. The Turkish poet Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel's long epic poem *Han Duvarları* ('Walls of the Inn') narrates crossing the Anatolian steppe during a cold winter in the years of the First World War (Çamlıbel 1974). In the poem, the protagonist traces the sad journey of a fellow poet (Maraşlı Şeyhoğlu) through his scribbled poems on the walls of the inns on a major route crossing the central Anatolian plateau.¹ Maraşlı's stanzas on the inn walls are emotional and deeply personal, and they stand out as visceral expressions of pain and suffering. Çamlıbel's walls are liminal sites of inscription where poetry and trauma come together.

While surveying in the north-western Konya province in 2015, Yalburt Yaylası's Archaeological Survey Project team encountered an ongoing restoration project of a fifteenth-century mosque, the Mosque of Pir Hüseyin Bey (Çukur Cami) in the small town of Ilgın.² During the restoration, the walls of this modest mosque with a columnar plan were stripped, revealing more than 200 spolia (reused architectural fragments) within its walls and foundations from the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, including carved architectural fragments, tombstones and sarcophagus lids. One small honey-coloured marble fragment of a revetment in the upper reaches of the north-western wall had a tiny graffito carved lightly on its surface, the barely legible writing of shaking hands (see Figure I.1 in the

Introduction and the book cover):

'Mother of god, help your servants!'³

A few months after our documentation of the reused blocks in the mosque, the stone walls of the building were stripped back by the contractors and the stone with the graffiti disappeared without further documentation. This hailing, this resilient call from a tenth to eleventh century Byzantine community of Ilgin was erased and lost due to the explicit maltreatment of historic monuments and cultural heritage within a brutal neoliberal capitalist regime. This stands as an example of the fragile history of graffiti.

If graffiti are a 'critical part of an ongoing process by which individuals forge and express a sense of community' (Lee 2016: 9), it takes place only through an eventful and embodied, poetic as well as a political act of the inscription of place. This powerful nature of graffiti distinguishes them from state-sponsored monuments, which may choose similar sites for appropriation, yet have a substantially different (visual and verbal) language and agenda. Monuments aim to achieve precision and a high level of visibility for their negotiated statements of political ideology, where the audiences are the subjects of the state or those who are up against it in its borderlands (Nelson and Olin 2003). Interacting with a monument is itself the process by which subjects are produced, in the sense that becoming a target audience of a monument is precisely how we become subjects of the state. That is the primary objective of a monument. Furthermore, monuments attempt to structure territorial space. In contrast, graffiti often choose an intentional illegibility, where the audience is the anonymous: the serendipitous passer-by who shares the marginality of the author. Graffiti deconstruct established structures of territoriality and therefore can be understood as counter-monuments. In this sense, perhaps they are more compatible with iconoclastic acts of obliteration that render monuments impotent. The well-known example of a counter-monument, the Monument against Fascism, designed by the artists Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz in Hamburg-Harburg, Germany in 1986, was a stern-looking lead-coated 12-metre-tall column that was lowered to the ground and disappeared on November 10, 1993. The designers of this iconic structure invited citizens of the city to mark their names on the soft, dark lead surfaces of the monument and cover it with memorial graffiti, a collective performative act that was directly linked to the counter-monumental discourse of the structure (Young 2003: 440). While monuments claim and embody perpetuity with a stubborn material persistence to stay in place forever, graffiti remain ephemeral, fleeting and animate with their intimate humanity. While monuments are sites of symmetrical planning, state authority and the colonization of public spaces for distributed spectacles of the state, graffiti constitute sites of resistance, spatial reorientation and an index of the embodied self.

Rock monuments of Anatolia

These material, contextual and semantic distinctions that, I argue, exist between monument and graffito can be instructive in understanding the rock-cut inscriptions and reliefs from Near Eastern antiquity. Images and texts carved on the living rock are often called ‘monuments’ in Near Eastern archaeological contexts (e.g. Emre 2002, Ehringhaus 2005, Glatz and Plourde 2011). Studying numerous rock reliefs and inscriptions from the Anatolian peninsula during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (roughly fourteenth through seventh centuries BC), I came to the conclusion that many of the rock-cut inscriptions and pictorial imagery, commonly deemed as monuments by modern academics, often oscillate between being a monument and a graffito if we accept the conceptual comparison presented above. In this chapter, I argue that the alternative ontologies of graffiti and their territorial character as a distribution of the self may shed light on our current interpretations of rock inscriptions and reliefs in Hittite and Iron Age Anatolia.⁴ If these can be described accurately as roughly hewn places where the human practices of inscription come into contact with the mineral world, one might also argue that this act of inscription on the living rock adheres to or colonizes the temporality of the rock, which is long-lasting and slow-moving in contrast to the ephemerality of memory and the immediacy of the human present. Therefore, comparing monuments and graffiti is also a question of temporality. Furthermore, in their materiality, the unfinished quality of many of the rock reliefs and inscriptions also create the possibility of reading at least some of these ‘monuments’ as graffiti.

In the last two centuries of the Hittite Empire (c. 1350-1175 BC) the southern and western borderlands of the empire witnessed the construction of clusters of ‘landscape monuments’.⁵ As this newly coined term implies, they are incorporated into the rural landscape, having been located at geologically significant places such as prominent rock outcrops, mountain passes, mouths of springs, deep river gorges or the walls of caves. Their monumentality is often compromised in many cases, due to the conditions of lighting and their modest scale in the midst of vast rock surfaces or boulder fields. Archaeologists who visit Hittite rock relief sites know all too well how difficult it is to locate them, even when you have a map. While some of the rock reliefs like Karabel or Hanyeri are carved to mark a mountain pass and their visibility is their most prominent character, other carvings such as Fıraktın, İmamkulu and Hatip represent modest and rather intimate engagements with a very special place. It is notable that the reliefs and inscriptions belong to a *koine* (shared sphere) of rock carving in Anatolia amongst the Great Kings of the Hittite Empire and the various other rulers and political elites at the edges of the empire. The shared visual and verbal language includes hieroglyphic Luwian as the preferred language, and a

visual vocabulary of divine and royal imagery (Fig. 3.1).

Rock monuments in the Land of Mira

In the context of such comparison between monuments and graffiti, a close look at the cluster of Late Bronze Age rock inscriptions and reliefs known from the verdant river valleys and mountains of the western end of the Anatolian peninsula may be especially instructive (Fig. 3.2). The discovery of hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions and rock reliefs at the far western frontier of the empire, known from Hittite texts as Arzawa, has consistently provoked the assumption that these were in a way signatures of the Hittite state in a remote landscape (Ehringhaus 2005: 84–94; Peschlow-Bindokat and Herboldt 2001). Yet, recent work has clearly shown that the rock reliefs and inscriptions in this Aegean landscape are associated with the local political landscape and they have been indisputably shown to be the work of the kings of Mira (Hawkins 1998; 2014). The kings of Mira, attested in Hittite texts from late fourteenth to late thirteenth century BC, participated in the shared Anatolian practice of inscribing the rock in hieroglyphic Luwian and carving images of kingship and divinity as a visual idiom that has become associated with the Hittite Empire in the scholarly literature. It is more likely that a regional practice was simply co-opted by the Hittite kings as a stamp of their own supra-regional supremacy. We see similar engagements with this inscriptional practice, the shared visual idiom and the use of the living rock as medium by other states, rivals or successors, to the Hittites: for example, by the rulers of Kizzuwatna and Tarhuntašša in southern Anatolia during the Late Bronze Age; and the Tabalian kings of the Lower Land in the Early Iron Age such as Hartapus and Warpalawaš.⁶ This *koine* of rock carving was sustained by the rulers of the Early Iron Age kingdoms in Anatolia, which claimed Hittite heritage (in some cases direct descent from the Hittite dynasty) in the aftermath of the Empire's collapse around 1175

BC.⁷



Fig. 3.1 Karabel Rock Relief of 'Tarkasnawa, King of Mira', near Manisa, Turkey. Late thirteenth century BC. Photograph by the author.

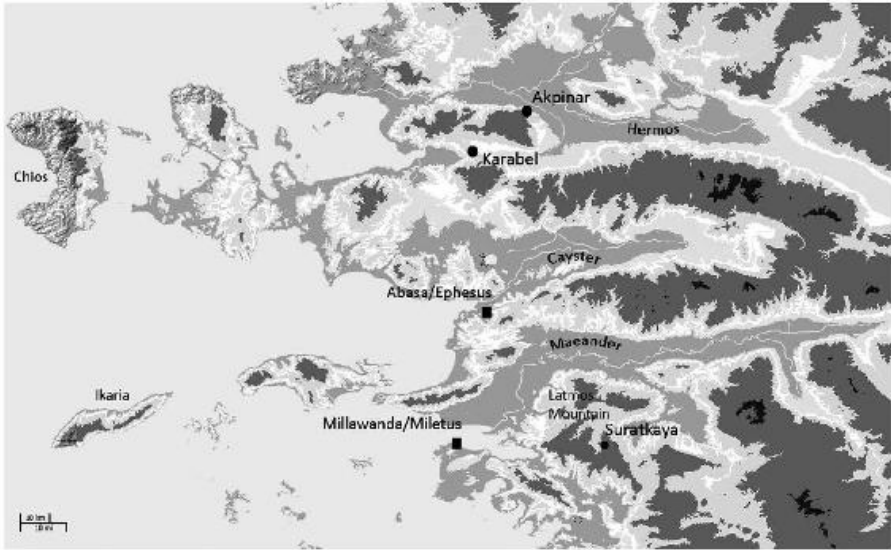


Fig. 3.2 Map of the Land of Mira with sites discussed in the text. Map produced by the author. Base map © 2012 Ancient World Mapping Center (Creative Commons CC BY-NC 3.0 license).

The three rock-cut sites of the Late Bronze Age are associated with this region (for the location of these monuments see Fig. 3.2). These are (a) *Akpınar*, the site of a monumentally carved standing male deity at a spring on the northern slopes of Spil (Spylus) Mountain (Fig. 3.3); (b) *Karabel*, a cluster of rock reliefs and inscriptions at a mountain pass across the Bozdağ Mountain range (Tmolus) between Ephesus and Sardis, connecting the valleys of Gediz (Hermos) and Küçük Menderes (Kaystros) (Fig. 3.1); and (c) *Surat kaya*, the rock shelter with the graffiti inscriptions located on the Beşparmak (Latmos) Mountain (Figures 3.4–3.6). The terrain for all three rock sites perhaps suggests a local fascination with mountainous landscapes and peaks in this region of lush river valleys and fertile plains (Thonemann 2011: 22–6). When one looks closely at the sites of Karabel and Akpınar, it becomes strikingly obvious that both combine a visually prominent rock monument and a cluster of graffiti-like inscriptions associated with them. At Akpınar, a standing and bearded male mountain deity (locally known as ‘Taş Sûret’ lit. ‘Stone Image/Face’) was carved deeply into a massive niche (7.5 metres in height) in the steep limestone cliffs of Mt Spylus, gazing onto a vast agricultural plain and a gushing spring down below (Ehringhaus 2005: 84–7; Garstang 1910: 168–9; Rojas and Segueenkova 2014: Fig. 11; see also Segueenkova and Rojas 2016) (Fig. 3.3). Two graffiti inscriptions in hieroglyphic Luwian have been carved near the base of the statue, referring to a certain ‘Ku(wa)lanamuwa/Ku(wa)lamuwa, Prince,’ most likely a local ruler in the final centuries of the Hittite Empire, and the other to ‘Zuwani’ and his two titles, likely belonging to an individual of the post-Hittite time

period (Fig. 3.4).⁸ The Karabel A monument is also visually powerful, linking to the landscape around it, having been carved high on a steep limestone cliff overlooking the ravine and the mountain pass. This monumental relief of an iconic warrior figure, which is depicted in profile holding a bow and spear (Fig. 3.1), and its subsidiary inscription have been decisively linked to Tarkasnawa, king of Mira, thanks to David Hawkins' reading of his name on the monument (Hawkins 1998). On the lower slopes of the pass, three other sets of carvings and inscriptions were known as Karabel B, and Karabel C1 and C2. All of these have been destroyed during the expansion of the highway in this area. While Karabel B was also a representation of the warrior figure, Karabel C1 and C2 were graffiti-like inscriptions that referred to rulers of the Land of Mira (Güterbock 1967).

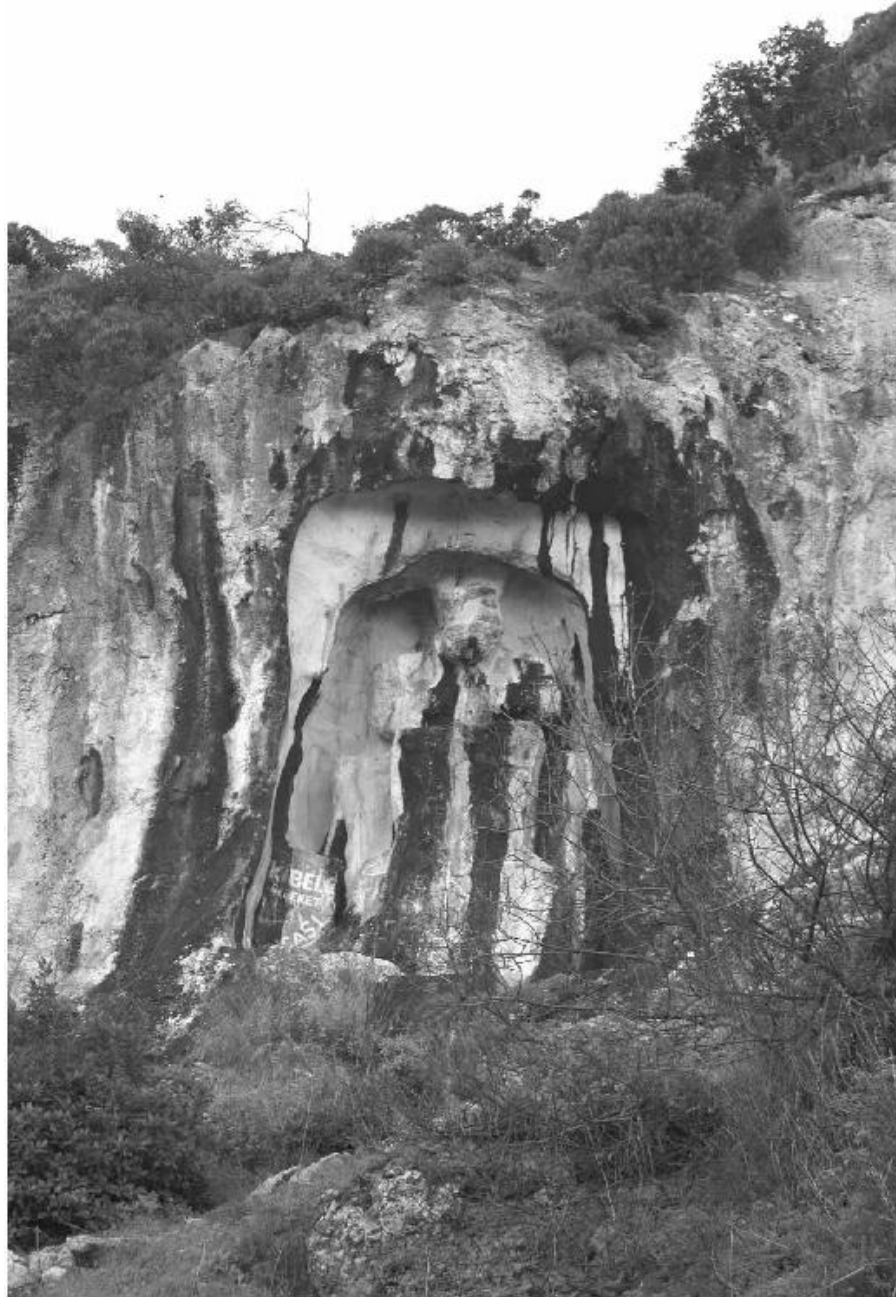


Fig. 3.3 Rock image of a standing and bearded male mountain deity at Akpınar springs near Manisa, on the slopes of Spil Mountain, at a site locally known as 'Taş Sûret' lit. 'Stone Image/Face'. c. thirteenth century BC. Photograph by the author.

As many of the contributors to this volume have pointed out, graffiti in antiquity were primarily a way of engaging with monuments of the past, either deconstructing them, endorsing them, adhering to their powerful

presence or undermining their ideology. However, this perspective ascribes an assumed secondary status to graffiti: a practice of inscription that comes *after the fact*, long after the social space has already been created and established, an inherently late response produced by a fragmentary present articulating a long-lost nostalgic whole. This further reduces graffiti to the status of some form of *patina*, to borrow Shannon Lee Dawdy's term (2016), or weathering on an aged architectural surface. Yet, the case study I present below suggests that this was not always a graffiti's status: graffiti sometimes arrived at a place prior to its monumentalization (for another case study regarding this aspect of graffiti, see Ragazzoli in this volume).

Suratkaya in the Land of Mira: a sacred mountain and its inscriptions

The stunning archaeological landscape of the Latmos Mountain (Beşparmak Dağları) has been the subject of an investigation by an archaeological team from the German Archaeological Institute since 1994.⁹ Located to the north and northeast of Bafa Lake in north-western Caria, Latmos Mountain is an unusual geological landscape, extensively covered by granitic gneiss outcrops, an extremely hard volcanic formation (Bozkurt 2003). What is archaeologically distinctive about this mountain is the presence of hundreds of prehistoric rock paintings and carvings, which densely mark this highly evocative gneiss landscape. Rock paintings are applied to the surfaces and walls of multiple caves, shelters and rock outcrops in distinct clusters. Peschlow-Bindokat and her team date the rock art of Latmos Mountain to the late Neolithic and early and middle Chalcolithic periods during the sixth and fifth millennia BC, based on a comparison of rock imagery to the iconography on the ceramics from the region as well as material evidence from DAI surveys (Peschlow-Bindokat 2003: 76; 2009: 58). Peschlow-Bindokat reports that in the Latmos rock paintings, the mountain itself is depicted as a dragon or sacred place. Many of the rock art clusters are distributed around the mountain peak and in at least some of the sites, the rock paintings are oriented towards the peak (Peschlow-Bindokat 2009: 59).

The dense distribution of rock art on the gneiss mountain, their shared visual vocabulary and their site-specific nature strongly suggests that Mt Latmos was a holy mountain for prehistoric communities. This may be associated with the volcanic geology that created a spectacular landscape of massive gneiss boulders, outcrops, caverns and shelters, as well as a very lush and watery landscape with abundant springs and streams. Strabo (14.1.8) describes the Latmos Mountain as 'the mountain of the Phtheires' and points out that the handsome Anatolian shepherd Endymion's tomb was located in a cave here (Thonemann 2011: 75–6). A temple to Zeus Akraios (at the site locally known as Dikilitaş) was built on one of the peaks of the

Latmos Mountain (Peschlow-Bindokat 2009: 61; 2003: Abb 9a-c). The caves and shelters housed hermits of the Byzantine period in a variety of monastic establishments (Peschlow-Bindokat 2005: 162-3).

The rock shelter locally known as Surat kaya (literally 'the face rock') is located on a high point on the mountain, on the south-eastern edge of the Latmos archaeological landscape (Fig. 3.5). As part of the gneiss plateau known as Sakarkaya Yaylası, it is part of a high pasture landscape, quite secluded from the settlements of the lowlands that is perched at the edge of an impressive gorge (Peschlow-Bindokat and Herbordt 2001). The shelter was discovered during the field season of 2000, when Peschlow-Bindokat's team came across a set of hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions – carved with a technology not dissimilar to the rock images across the prehistoric Latmos landscape (Fig. 3.6). The incised inscriptions are distributed across the protected rear surface of a massive shelter and carved in at least six different sets in an area roughly four by 12 metres, giving the impression that they were inscribed during multiple visits.

For the historical geographers and philologists of Anatolian languages, the sudden and unexpected appearance of this novel set of hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions from the highest reaches of the Latmos Mountain caused an expected level of excitement, and they were quickly studied and published (Hawkins 2014: 21; Oreshko 2013: 346-68; Peschlow-Bindokat and Herbordt 2001). In one set of inscriptions, the name of the local Late Bronze Age kingdom 'Land of Mira' was clearly read. In another, a certain 'Great King's Son *Ku...ia*' was read, with the actual syllabic reading of the ruler's name being uncertain (sometimes read as Kupaya, although the middle sign remains uncertain, see Hawkins 2014: 21).¹⁰ A great majority of the inscriptions are too weathered or too fragmentary to be read completely. The reading of the geographical designation Land of Mira immediately connected the Surat kaya monument to Karabel and Akpınar as part of the territories controlled by the same dynasty. It is important to reiterate that all three sites were visited on multiple occasions, turning the sites into repositories or archives of inscriptions, performing the act of inscription at each visit.



Fig. 3.4 Suratkaya rock shelter on Mt Latmos. Photograph by the author.

Even though the current reading of the Suratkaya graffiti does not conclusively suggest the political control of the Latmos Mountain by the political elite of the Land of Mira to the north, it can be presumed that this sacred mountain may have acted as a site of pilgrimage. For this reason, the bold inscriptions and imperial imagery carved on the limestone outcrop of the Karabel mountain pass could be understood as a dynastic borderland monument, while the Suratkaya shelter, with its graffiti on the granitic gneiss outcrop, may have served as a holy place on a sacred mountain visited by Luwian elites on multiple occasions. This proposal brings us a nuanced understanding of the rock inscriptions: (a) inscriptions as monuments, as in the case of Karabel A; (b) graffiti inscriptions that respond to a pre-existing monument, as in the case of the graffiti at Akpınar and Karabel C1 and C2; and (c) graffiti inscriptions that mark a holy place such as a cave or a sacred rock, such as the Suratkaya site. This proposal also helps us to understand the political and religious landscape in the Land of Mira, with its core territories in the Cayster and Hermos river valleys and a distant pilgrimage landscape of the Latmos Mountain.



Fig. 3.5 Suratkaya rock shelter on Mt Latmos. Wall of graffiti. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 3.6 Suratkaya rock shelter on Mt Latmos, detail of rock graffiti. Photograph by the author.

Conclusions

While the Karabel rock relief has been shown to have been sponsored by the dynasts or the political elites of the Land of Mira, we are not entirely sure

whether this was the case for the Suratkaya inscriptions. Thinking through the graffiti and rock monuments of the Land of Mira, I present here a few more observations. The archaeological context of the Suratkaya rock inscriptions, far away from any sustainable, year-round Late Bronze Age settlements or any notable route, suggests that we are inevitably drawn to associate them with the long-term practice of landscape veneration on Latmos Mountain and the cultural significance of the Suratkaya shelter in the context of this holy landscape as documented by Peschlow-Bindokat and the German Archaeological Institute team. Following the discovery of the hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions, the immediate scholarly attempt was to incorporate the Suratkaya inscriptions into the imperial corpus of monuments and the network-based models for the larger Hittite Empire. However, I suggest that the Suratkaya carvings make sense in association with the rich localized corpus of prehistoric imagery and the practice of rock paintings. In *Place, Memory and Healing: An Archaeology of Anatolian Rock Monuments* (Harmanşah 2015), I argued that rock reliefs and inscriptions of Late Bronze Age Anatolia have been associated with political territorial structures of the Hittite Empire and linked to the exercise of political agents based on rather slim evidence. Such a macro-scale perspective undercuts the very significance of the rock reliefs and inscriptions which explicitly respond to local geologies, the deep genealogy of local histories and subaltern practices. Perspectives that prioritize imperial visions erase the significance of local landscapes and local relationships from which such monuments emerge. Macro-perspectives and network-based models move us away from thinking about monuments as places of site-specific practices and rituals.

Secondly, I return to the question of whether we should consider the Suratkaya carvings to be monuments or graffiti. If we think of the production of monuments as a state-sponsored technology; shaping the public space using architectural, visual and textual narratives that fabricate an official version of history for the public at large, graffiti can be understood as a counter-monument – a visually powerful form of expression that undermines, ridicules or subverts the stern face of the monumental. Cultural historians and anthropologists have also talked about memorials such as roadside shrines or spontaneous monuments, which – with respect to the definition above – perhaps have a closer affinity to graffiti. While monuments are made to last – they attempt to achieve permanence, explicitly resist transience and adhere to the geological temporality of the bedrock or the metaphor of stone-stubborn as found in the diorite statues of rulers in Egypt and Mesopotamia, – graffiti, by their nature, recognize their transience and ephemerality. As Louise Höjer (2008: 243) puts it: ‘Inscription seems to be a fight against transience, yet graffiti is very self-aware of its transience ... As such it is an exploration into an identity that historicizes the here and now.’

Therefore, graffiti appear through this analysis as a powerful tool of resistance, collective creativity, spontaneity and performance. However, was the distinction between the two modern categories of monument and graffiti so clear-cut in antiquity, especially when it came to the practice of carving the living rock and appropriating the temporality of the bedrock? If we follow the current literature on rock reliefs and inscriptions of the Hittite Empire, we are led to believe that we must consider them all as monuments, even though this may conflict with the material status, style and placement of the carvings. What I propose is that instead of insisting that such sites fit these predetermined categories, it is more productive to investigate the site-specific practices of the inscription and re-inscription of places where this act of inscribing is an important component of place-making processes in the long term.

The inscription of a place then does not produce that space *ex nihilo* or on the surface of an untouched rock, but it derives its power and efficacy from the potency of its location. At the same time, the inscription is consumed by the deep history of the place and the meanings and stories embedded in its fabric. This is what I would like to call the *political ecology of places*. The Suratmaya inscriptions, possibly carved during multiple visits to this special shelter of cultural significance, do not respond to, commemorate, denounce or deconstruct a pre-existing monument; instead they build a landscape of recognition at a site of long-term practice. The graffiti are no less political than are monuments themselves; they too speak to territoriality, the desire to shape and control public space and they allow an effective referencing of the past.

Tweets from Antiquity: Literacy, Graffiti, and their Uses in the Towns and Deserts of Ancient Arabia

Michael C.A. Macdonald

Between the first century BC and the fourth century AD the nomads of ancient Syria and Arabia covered the desert rocks with their graffiti. As a result, we know a great deal more about their way of life, social structures and even their emotions, than we do about those of their rural and urban contemporaries. In this chapter, I will explore the differences between the graffiti of the nomads and those of the settled peoples in this region within the context of the different ways in which they used literacy in general and graffiti in particular.

Graffiti and the uses of literacy

There are many societies that rely on literacy for their basic functions even though the majority of the population is illiterate, the necessary reading and writing being done by a scribal or priestly class. Early mediaeval Europe is one example (e.g. Clanchy 1993), ancient Egypt, at least before the Graeco-Roman period, another (e.g. Baines 2007, especially 59–78). I would call these ‘literate societies’ because writing is vital to their basic functions. However, there are ‘non-literate societies’ in which word-of-mouth and memory are used for all those functions for which writing would be employed in a ‘literate society’. Examples of these are most mediaeval and early modern nomadic societies, and pre-literate urban cultures in antiquity.

However, there are also communities where the *society* is non-literate, as defined above, but in which large numbers can read and write. They are literate, but the society continues to function entirely through word-of-mouth and memory for communication and record. To us, in our compulsively literate society – where people in the same room will often text each other – this appears bizarre and perverse. Yet it exists. One recent example was the Tuareg of north-west Africa who had their own script, the Tifinagh, which they used to carve graffiti, play games, write playful love notes, etc. while, maintaining a determinedly non-literate (oral) society in

which administration, communication, business, history, literature, indeed anything which was practical or important, was transmitted by word-of-mouth and preserved in the memory (Aghali-Zakara and Drouin 1973–1979; Galand-Pernet 1998).

In this chapter I shall compare how graffiti were used in two different ancient communities: one – as defined above – a ‘non-literate society’ which was nomadic and the other a ‘literate society’ which was settled. The first is known today only from its graffiti; the second was described by Greek and Roman authors and produced numerous official inscriptions. Yet, we know far more about the daily life, social structures and personal feelings of the first group than we do of the second – this is due to the nature and number of their graffiti.

The vast majority of the ancient graffiti I shall be discussing are ‘personal statements made in a public place’. In this sense, they are comparable to tweets, albeit ethereal ones. There are, of course, differences. The ancient graffiti had no limits on their length but could only be seen in one place, whereas a tweet must be short but is not site specific. In addition, a graffito can be destroyed by the author or one of the readers, whereas we are told that tweets are eternal. However, the basic idea of personal self-expression in a public place with no control over who reads it is the same; I hope that the similarity is sufficient to justify my rather frivolous title.

Graffiti in a non-literate society

Between approximately the first century BC and the fourth century AD the nomads of what is now southern Syria, Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia became literate and covered the rocks of the desert with tens of thousands of graffiti.¹ The script they used is called ‘Safaitic’ and is one of a number of alphabets used by nomads and oasis-dwellers throughout the western two-thirds of ancient Arabia (Macdonald [2000] 2009, III: 37–41). The Safaitic script was entirely different from the Aramaic and Greek scripts used by their settled neighbours in the Ḥawrān and Nabataea and so the nomads’ ability to read and write in it would have been of no use to them in communicating with, or finding work among, the villagers and town-dwellers. If they wished to obtain work which required literacy in the settled areas they had to learn Aramaic or Greek. There are a handful of Greek-Safaitic bilinguals which shows that their authors had learnt enough Greek in the settled areas to carve their names (Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 76–8). We even have one text which is in an ancient Arabian language carved in Greek letters (Al-Jallad and Al-Manaser 2015).

This is the only period before the present day in which the nomads of this region have been literate, and we can only speculate as to why and how this came about. The hypothesis I have put forward elsewhere is that one or more nomads may have seen a merchant, or someone else in an oasis,

writing and, out of curiosity, asked to be taught to do the same. This must have happened in north-west Arabia where the languages used were similar to those spoken by the nomads and the scripts were from the same family of alphabets as Safaitic. If it had happened in the Ḥawrān or Nabataea, the nomads would have learnt to write in the Aramaic script. With the well-developed memory of a member of a non-literate society, learning the letters for the twenty-eight consonants of his language would not have taken long, and the nomad would then have returned to the desert to show off his skills, tracing the letters in the dust or scratching them upon a rock. In an age before cheap and plentiful paper, nomads would have had little to write on except the rocks of the desert. Papyrus would have been expensive outside Egypt (Skeat 1995; Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 75, n. 84), and nomads had more practical uses for leather than writing on it. Moreover, they are unlikely to have carried much pottery because it was breakable and difficult to replace, so they did not have access to the almost inexhaustible supply of sherds which were the most common writing surfaces for those in settled areas (e.g. Barnard 2008, esp. 414–5). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that literacy did not take over from orality in the everyday functions of this society and turn it into a ‘literate society’ as defined above.

However, these nomads did have one use for writing, and that was as a pastime in the long periods of solitary idleness while they were watching the herds pasture and/or looking out for game or enemies. Before they learnt to write, they had been carving tribal marks (*wusūm*) and rock drawings for millennia. Now they could now add graffiti to their repertoire, and they did so with great enthusiasm. Tens of thousands of these graffiti in the Safaitic script have been discovered so far, and this is the result of relatively few surveys. The vast numbers of these graffiti in an area which can never have supported a very large population at any one time suggest that literacy must have been almost universal among the nomads during this period. Among all these texts, there are none which we would consider to have any practical use: no notices, invoices, decrees, legal documents, histories or literature, except for a couple of extracts from poems which have recently been identified (Al-Jallad 2015a; 2017). All we have from this society are personal statements left in a public space.

The vast majority of these graffiti begin with the author’s name and a genealogy of varying lengths. Many stop at this point or add ‘was here’ or state that they had carved an accompanying rock drawing. Thus, to take two examples at random:²

1. ‘s¹ son of Mlk son of Bdn was here [Literally ‘By ’s ... is this place’].

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2. By ’mr son of  tm is the young she-camel [next to the drawing of the camel].

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However, a very significant number continue with a ‘narrative’ saying what the author had done recently or was doing at the time of writing, expressing emotions (mainly sadness for various reasons), describing the activities of his or her family members or neighbours, or of their own or other lineage groups or peoples beyond the desert such as the Romans, Jews, Nabataeans, etc. Finally, there is usually a prayer to one or more deities (sometimes a long list), almost always for security (*silm*), but often also for a change of circumstances, rain, revenge, protection from enemies, etc., with a curse on anyone who damages the text and, less often, a blessing on those who do not. The following example may illustrate this:

3. By Zd son of Rgl and he pastured the camels in this valley the year Caesar’s son died;
and he heard that Philippus [probably Philip the Tetrarch] had been killed but he
scoffed. And [by him is the drawing of] the young she-camel. And O Gd-Df curse
whoever may scratch out that which gives pleasure and [grant] booty to whoever
leaves the carving untouched.

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All these, but particularly no. 4 below, are good examples of the ‘episodic’ nature of these narratives. They are carved as ideas come to the author, rather than with a pre-conceived sequence of statements. There is, of course, a basic structure of name–narrative–prayer, but this can be added to, or distorted, as new, and often unrelated, ideas occur to the author.

The script and orthography of Safaitic indicates that it was used for little else than carving on rocks. The texts can flow in any direction to suit the shape of the rock, and no letter depends on the reader’s stance for its interpretation, unlike the ‘formal’ scripts used in the public inscriptions (including the graffiti) of the settled peoples in ancient North and South Arabia.³ These features also suggest that there was no tradition of using the Safaitic script to write in ink since this almost always results in a fixed direction of writing (Macdonald 2015: 3–7). There is also no word division in Safaitic, in contrast to the public ancient North Arabian texts by settled peoples in the oases of Taymā’ and Dadan (see note 3). Finally, in the graffiti of the nomads, each individual wrote as he or she spoke, which means that dialectal variations (at least those that show up in the consonantal orthography) and slurs between words are reflected in the spelling (Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 88–9; forthcoming; Al-Jallad 2015b: 38).

It is also clear that knowledge of the script was spread informally from one nomad to another because we have found several examples of the alphabet carved on rocks in neither of the traditional orders used in schools in settled regions. In each case, the letters are arranged in a different order, apparently grouping together letters which the author considered had similar shapes (Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 85–8).

Thus, the Safaitic script was used in a way which favoured the author over the reader (Macdonald 2015: 6–7). The latter has to start by working out where the text begins and in which direction it is running, then by mentally

dividing it into separate words, supplying all the vowels, and finally trying to understand the – often elliptical – forms of expression. Of course, this does not mean that those who used the script for their own graffiti would have had any difficulty in reading the graffiti of others. It is simply that the script has developed in a way which is convenient for someone carving on irregular desert rocks and, taken together with the orthography, this strongly suggests that this is what it was mainly used for, rather than writing with pen and ink.

Thus, the form of the script and the orthography, together with the content which deals with the actions and feelings of the author, make it clear that these texts are examples of self-expression not of communication, i.e. in the words of the introduction to this volume, they were ‘writing for themselves alone’ rather than ‘addressing a wide audience’.

Nevertheless, we know that at least some of the graffiti *were* read by others, since others have left their own texts nearby. The discovery of a text may well have invariably induced sadness in the finder given that the original author was likely either dead by then or far away. In the following example, the reason for the author’s grief is made explicit, but often it is not. Presumably because, given that the author knew the reason and he was only writing for himself, he did not need to spell it out.

4. By Mnʿl son of ʿwsʿl son of Sʿhr son of Ḥml. And he found the inscription of Mnʿl and the inscription of Tmʿl and the inscription of Sʿhr, who are lost. And so, O Lt, [grant] security to him who remains [i.e. the author] and revenge on him who killed [them]. And he grieved for ʿwsʿl and for Wdʿ, his neighbour, both lost. And O Bʿlsʿmn blind whoever scratches out the inscription.

LP 305

Very occasionally, a mischievous writer would add rude remarks to another person’s text, presumably on the assumption that someone, possibly the original author, might come along and read them. For instance:

5. By ʿzhm son of ʿnʿm son of ʿzhm of the lineage of Ngbr, the year Baalshamin [the sky god] withheld it [the rain]. And he spent the night here – and he farted first.

LP 350

Indeed, there is one amusing ‘graffiti conversation’ where two people in texts on adjacent rocks each claim to have built an enclosure, and then in two more graffiti on the same rock call each other liars!⁴

Graffiti clusters in the desert

‘Pastime clusters’

Single Safaitic graffiti can be found almost anywhere with rock that is suitable for inscribing in the deserts of southern Syria, north-eastern Jordan

and northern Saudi Arabia. However, in these same deserts, there are also large concentrations of graffiti by nomads. One example is a promontory above an ancient well called al-ʿĪsāwī, overlooking the Wādī al-Shām in southern Syria. Some years ago, the Safaitic Epigraphic Survey Programme recorded 3,700 Safaitic graffiti on this small headland. The fact that the grazing in the wādī is excellent in winter and spring, that there is almost perennial water nearby and that it is on a major southwest–northeast route is enough to explain its popularity, although it has to be said that no other promontory in this part of the wādī has such a large concentration of graffiti. Another example is Jabal Says,⁵ which consists of two concentric volcanic cones. There is a semi-permanent lake there and the summit is one of the best look-out points in the area. There, one finds hundreds of Safaitic (Fig. 4.1), a few Greek, and many Arabic texts – including a precious pre-Islamic Arabic graffito dated to AD 528 – as well as numerous Islamic Arabic texts.⁶

These are just two out of thousands of examples of clusters of Safaitic and other texts at places where there was water and pasture, and/or good look-out points. These clusters probably developed over many years, even centuries, as different people used the place for similar purposes and found themselves with time on their hands. Some of the authors say that they were pasturing animals, or keeping watch, others simply leave their names or mention other things which concerned them. There is no indication that these places were more than simply useful; it is more probable that these graffiti clusters are simply an accidental consequence.



Fig. 4.1 A cluster of Safaitic graffiti at Jabal Says, southern Syria. Photograph M.C.A. Macdonald.

Funerary clusters

However, collections of Safaitic graffiti are also found at cairns, and these constitute a different type of cluster with a different reason for carving the texts. At the period when they were inscribed (c. first century BC to fourth century AD), the nomads of this area buried some of their dead beneath large cairns built from the basalt rocks which cover the desert floor, as the nomads in this area still do. It appears to have been the custom for the mourners to build the cairn over the grave and to place on it stones which they had inscribed with their names, often their relationship to the deceased, and the fact that they were mourning, and/or building the cairn, for him or her (Macdonald [1993] 2009, II: 383–5). The structure of these funerary inscriptions closely resembles that of the graffiti, which is another strong argument in favour of the hypothesis that these nomads used their literacy almost exclusively to mark passing of time. If they had been using writing for many different purposes in daily life, they would have had a number of different formulae to choose from and to adapt. The fact that in all cases they adapt only the formulae of the graffiti surely suggests that they were accustomed to writing little else. However, the apparent ‘graffiti’ in these funerary clusters clearly had a different purpose. It would seem that by carving an inscription and placing it on the cairn the individual nomad was taking part in a public and communal act, even if he did so some time after the ceremony.

Religious clusters?

Although the Safaitic texts contain large numbers of prayers addressed to a wide variety of deities, we have not yet identified any sanctuaries or holy places in the desert where the worshippers might have gathered. However, there are occasional small clusters of texts (usually by members of the same family) which say that their authors performed a sacrifice.⁷ We also know that some of the nomads were at least aware of pilgrimages to the temple of Baalshamin at Sī^c on Jabal Ḥawrān, but only one fragmentary Safaitic text has so far been found there.

These are the only types of ‘cluster’ of Safaitic graffiti which have been identified so far. It seems likely that, with the exception of the funerary clusters, carving graffiti was generally a solitary pursuit for these nomadic authors. The clustering of their graffiti seems usually to have been an accident of topography, rather than a deliberate choice. While individual graffiti can be found wherever there is inscribable rock, clusters are almost always found in places with a good view of the surrounding desert, and/or near seasonal or permanent water and/or good grazing.

Graffiti in a literate society: Nabataean

As we have seen, the nomads of the Syro-Arabian deserts between the first century BC and fourth century AD belonged to non-literate societies full of literate individuals who, with the possible exception of funerary clusters, appear to have used their skills purely for carving graffiti.

By contrast with the nomads on its borders, Nabataea was clearly a 'literate society' in the sense I defined at beginning of this chapter, that is 'one in which reading and writing have become essential to its functioning, either throughout the society (as in the modern West) or in certain vital aspects, such as the bureaucracy, economic and commercial activities, or religious life' (Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 49).

The Nabataean written language

There is now evidence that in much of Nabataea the *spoken* language was almost certainly a dialect of Arabic. However, for reasons which are not yet clear, Arabic throughout Arabia seems to have remained an unwritten language until about the mid-fifth century AD (Macdonald 2010b). The *written* language used by the Nabataeans was a dialect of Aramaic expressed in a local development of the Imperial Aramaic script. Thus, while the nomads wrote as they spoke, the Nabataeans had to learn a different language if they wanted to write. Whether or not this was a major problem depended on how much an individual wanted to write. If one wanted to compose a legal document or a formal letter, one also needed to learn Aramaic or to use a professional scribe. However, if one just wanted to be able to write one's name, a subscription to a legal document, a graffito with conventional formulae, one would only have needed to learn the script, orthography and a tiny vocabulary of conventional terms.

We have no evidence of wide-spread schooling in Nabataea, though clearly there must have been schools for professional scribes and administrators of many different sorts. However, merchants – an extremely important group in a society which depended on international trade for its wealth – would almost certainly have needed to be able to read and write. From this point of view, Aramaic was the ideal written language since it had been the vehicular language of much of the Middle East and Egypt since the Neo-Babylonian empire. Although it had been replaced by Greek as the language of administration after Alexander's conquests, the continued use of Aramaic by the populations of the successor kingdoms shows that it was still the primary international language of the region. Unlike Greek, it also had the advantage of being relatively easy to learn for those speaking another Semitic language.

The Aramaic alphabet has twenty-two letters representing consonants and semi-vowels, while Arabic has a phonemic repertory of some twenty-

eight consonants. This meant that in a number of cases the same Aramaic letter had to serve for more than one distinct sound when writing an Arabic name or word in the Aramaic script, (similar to the letter ‘c’ in English, which can represent the sounds [k] and [s]). The fact that the transliteration of these Arabic sounds is extremely consistent, not only throughout Nabataean official inscriptions but also in the thousands of graffiti, strongly suggests an element of organized schooling throughout the Nabataean kingdom which stretched from southern Syria to north-west Arabia. What portion of the population received this training is unknown, but members of a very large number of professions – including those whom we would regard as artisans, such as masons – have left their graffiti in Nabataean Aramaic.⁸

Nabataean graffiti

Nabataean graffiti are usually very different from those in Safaitic. Whether they are in a man-made environment, such as the cities of Petra or Ḥegrā, or in a natural one such as the Arabian or Sinai deserts, they are predominantly what Laila Nehmé has aptly called ‘signatures’ (Nehmé 1997: 126–8). These ‘signatures’ consist of the author’s identity markers – his/her personal name, patronym and occasionally the grandfather’s name, but very rarely any longer genealogy – and these are usually framed by conventional Aramaic expressions such as *šlm*, ‘May so-and-so be secure’ or *dkyr* ‘May so-and-so be remembered’, and so on. Sometimes the author’s profession, and/or place of origin or social group, are added. Thus, for instance:

6. May ‘myw son of Ḥryšw priest of ‘Uzy’ [the Aramaic form of the divine name which appears as Al-‘Uzzā in Arabic] be safe and sound.

CIS ii 611, from Sinai

Unlike their Safaitic counterparts, Nabataean graffiti contain relatively few prayers, and these are almost always in a conventional form ‘May [the god or goddess] N be mindful of so-and-so’. Thus:

7. May Nblw son of ‘wydw be remembered for good and be secure before Dwšr’ [Dushara, the chief deity of the Nabataeans].

CIS ii 401

Again, in contrast to Safaitic, Nabataean graffiti hardly ever contain any narrative. Thus, the purpose of a Nabataean graffito was usually to record the author’s presence at a place, rather than verbal self-expression, though individuality is quite often expressed visually through the manner of the carving. For, in some Nabataean signatures, particularly in Sinai but also elsewhere in both town and desert, the authors played with the letter-forms, sometimes at the expense of legibility. This suggests that these particular authors had time to kill, possibly they were idling townsmen or travellers

sitting out the heat of the day in a shady place, and they show a familiarity and easy mastery of the script (see Fig. 4.2).⁹



Fig. 4.2 CIS ii 952. A Nabataean graffito in Sinai in which the author has played with the letters by carving the word *šlm* ('may he be safe and sound') back-to-front down the right side of the text and joining all the letters in each line (regardless of whether they would

Another interesting type of Nabataean signature is that of artisans – masons and sculptors – who signed their works so prominently that, to our eyes, they sometimes spoil the very work they are signing. Those who carved the tomb inscriptions at Ḥegrā either integrated their signatures into the text itself or, if they did not have room to do so, carved them as near as possible to the inscription. The practice of integrating the signature into the text is also found at the opposite end of the Nabataean kingdom, Ḥawrān in southern Syria (see Fig. 4.3). Even sculpture is signed in prominent places. This suggests an interesting public attitude to the people who carved these inscriptions and architectural decorations. We might think of them as ‘artisans’, but the prominence of their ‘signatures’ may suggest that they were accorded (or demanded) the respect which we would give to artists, whom we expect to sign their work, though not usually in such an intrusive manner.



Fig. 4.3 A squeeze of LPNab 105, a tomb inscription from the Ḥawrān southern Syria, in Greek (lines 1 and 2) and Nabataean (line 3), with the mason's name in Nabataean (line 4). From Littmann 1914: 84.

Graffiti clusters among the settled peoples

Signing-in clusters

In both Petra, the Nabataean capital, and the southern city of Ḥegrā (modern Madā'in Šālīḥ), clusters of up to 132 signatures have been found beside sanctuaries and the *triclinia*, outdoor banqueting areas where religious confraternities (the *mrzh'* or Θιάσοι) met (Healey 2001: 165–9). It would seem that, however untidily they are arranged, carving one's signature in these places was an act of piety which was possibly even part of a ceremony. Indeed, at the *triclinia*, it may have marked an individual's entry into the confraternity. There are, of course, signatures in other parts of these cities, but not in such concentrations, indeed usually they are single, isolated texts (Nehmé 1997). They are almost always on rock faces – which

are abundant in these cities – and, unlike Pompeii, are rarely on buildings, though this may simply be because at least some of the external walls were covered with plaster which has since disappeared (Shaer 2000).

Religious and pastime clusters

In north-western Arabia, other places have attracted large clusters of graffiti, for instance the oasis of Taymā' which was one of the most important nodes on the trans-Arabian trade routes (Hausleiter 2010). The chief deity of Taymā' was called Ṣalm and a hilltop south-south-east of the city is covered with scores of graffiti in the script of the oasis known as 'Taymanitic' (Koostra 2016 with references). Most of these are simple signatures (personal name, patronym, possibly grandfather's name), but there are also some religious statements such as 'whoever obeys Ṣalm will not perish' (Kootstra 2016: 93), or 'By N and he kept watch for Ṣalm' (Kootstra 2016: 79, 95), together with many drawings of a face which is assumed to represent Ṣalm (e.g. Winnett and Reed 1970: 31, 34; figs 36, 37; pls 22 and 23). Because of this, the hilltop was previously thought to have been a sanctuary, but it now seems clear that it was a look-out post guarding one of the approaches to Taymā'. These were 'pastime texts', carved by soldiers of a settled literate society doing a job which left them with plenty of time on their hands.

'And-me' clusters

The oasis of Taymā' in north-western Arabia was so important in the mid-first millennium BC that Nabonidus, the last Neo-Babylonian king, made it his residence for ten of the seventeen years of his reign. It is therefore not surprising that the large clusters of inscriptions on some of the sandstone outcrops in the desert around the oasis include texts by officials who say that they came there with Nabonidus. These are carved in the local language and script (Taymanitic) as well as in Imperial Aramaic, the vehicular language of the Babylonian empire.¹⁰ From a later date, there are at least two Nabataean 'signatures' by *strategoi* ('generals' or 'governors') (Al-Dhuyayb 2014: 63, no. 30; 103, no. 80) and, bizarrely, four graffiti in a local development of the Imperial Aramaic script by individuals claiming to be kings of Liḥyān, a state in the rival oasis of Dadan which had its own Ancient North Arabian script.¹¹ Despite the status of these authors, all of these are graffiti – as opposed to official statements such as the cartouche of Ramesses III in the environs of Taymā' (Al-Anṣārī 2011; Sperveslage and Eichmann 2012: 375), which is more like the planting of a country's flag in a foreign land. However, it is worth noting that one Nabataean 'graffito' by two *strategoi* is in a beautiful calligraphic hand at the very top of a rock face

covered with other graffiti (Fig. 4.4). It would seem that these officials wanted *their* 'signature' to be above all the others, and so ordered an unfortunate scribe to climb up and carve it (Al-Dhuyayb 2014: 63, no. 30).

The inscriptions of these kings and officials, along with countless others, are all on rock outcrops at least a day's journey from the oasis. Some of these outcrops are huge vertical rock faces which can provide shade at certain times of day, but others are 'horizontal' areas of bedrock protruding through the sand, where the presence of the graffiti is more difficult to explain. Moreover, there are large numbers of other vertical and horizontal outcrops in the same areas which bear no inscriptions. At present, it has not been possible to link any of the outcrops with water sources, though an extensive investigation is being carried out by the Saudi-British-German Epigraphy and Landscape in the Hinterland of Taymā' project, based at Oxford.

The graffiti in these outcrops were markers of the authors' presence and they represent the desire of passers-by to add their names to an existing cluster, which might be described as the 'and-me' instinct. This motivation is different from that which produced the 'pastime' texts in Safaitic and the playful Nabataean texts in Sinai. It is also distinct from that which moved people to leave their signatures in Nabataean at sanctuaries or *triclinia*, or prayers and religious statements in Taymanitic on Jabal Ghunaym and elsewhere. Of course, these clusters must have begun with one or two texts carved in a prominent place by people either with time on their hands or who felt the need to leave their mark. But as other literate people passed this place, the 'and-me' instinct took effect.



Fig. 4.4 A rock face at Sarmadā³, near Taymā³, with a large cluster of Nabataean graffiti including, at the top, the names of two *strategoī* in calligraphic Nabataean. Photograph by M.C.A. Macdonald.

Conclusions

The extraordinary extent of literacy in ancient western Arabia and its northern fringes produced a huge body of graffiti from a number of very different societies over almost a millennium. This provides interesting examples of the use of graffiti in both cities and the desert. The authors included nomads living in oral societies, the populations of settled literate societies, the inhabitants of oases and travellers. I have tried to suggest some of the possible motivations of those who carved these graffiti and how and why the different types of cluster developed. Carving these texts could be used as a pastime or a form of artistic play, as a way of expressing deeply felt emotions, or as an act of social solidarity. These are basic motivations which, of course, are universal and perennial. Nowadays, Twitter provides a new, ethereal, public space for self-expression. But, if the threats that a foolish tweet can never be deleted prove to be true, I wonder if in 2,000 years' time, scholars will be studying them as we still ponder the graffiti of the ancients.

Gezi Graffiti: Shout-outs to Resistance and Rebellion in Contemporary Turkey

Christiane Gruber

Introduction

During the summer of 2013, Istanbul, Ankara and dozens of other Turkish cities ‘shouted’ with the chants, slogans and graffiti of demonstrators who took to the streets, squares and parks to protest against then Prime Minister (now President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and police brutality. Initially prompted by the planned destruction of Gezi Park – one of the last remaining slivers of green space in central Istanbul – the ‘*Occupy Gezi* Movement’ quickly transformed from a last-ditch environmental effort into a large consortium of participants, growing in size after each police attack (Özkırımlı 2014). Lasting throughout the summer months, the defiant spirit of Gezi nevertheless has not subsided today. Instead, it catalysed the formation of the pro-Kurdish, pro-civil society party (HDP). It also prompted the further entrenchment of Erdoğan and his entourage of AKP loyalists in their ongoing efforts to crack down upon all forms of political dissent seen to threaten Erdoğan’s urge to concentrate power in his own hands by altering the Turkish parliamentary system of governance into a presidential one.

Beyond demonstrating against Erdoğan and the police, those who participated in the Gezi demonstrations mobilized for a host of different political, social and economic reasons, including to reclaim rights for the city and its endangered natural environment. Beyond fears of losing their shared eco-habitus, what connected the Kurd to the Alevi, the academic to the artist, the environmentalist to the feminist and the militant secularist to the anti-capitalist Muslim, was an overarching sense of disenfranchisement and silencing by a neoliberal Sunni-Islamist political apparatus spearheaded by a hubristic leader whose brash authoritarianism simply could no longer be tolerated by many citizens. In other words, the Gezi Park incident appears to have marked the final crossing of the Rubicon. Ever since the die was cast, the socio-political situation in Turkey has degraded so much (and so quickly) that political analysts now are sounding the alarm bells, warning that Turkish democracy has entered its ‘11th Hour’ (Dexter 2016).

During summer 2013, the graffiti-sprayed walls of Istanbul and other major cities too played their part (Gruber 2013; Yanik 2015). They echoed and sustained a multitude of dissenting individuals, incising their presence into pavements and walls. Most of all, through strategies of 'urban sabotage' (Kimvall 2014: 47), the graffiti violated cement buildings and 'retook' the streets and squares in the Taksim area, acting as highly visible agents for resistant place-making – a tactic of (re-)claiming ownership of a particular place that permeates other landscapes of contestation in different times and places. Within Turkey more precisely, Gezi's verbal messages engaged in playful, daring and proudly insolent backtalk, while figural images made use of subversive and humorous iconography to delegitimize the AKP and deflate Erdoğan's puffed-up persona.

As shout-outs to insubordination and rebellion, these numerous rhetorical and visual calls were inspired by Gezi slogans. However, the graffiti did not emerge merely as side-effects or afterthoughts: on the contrary, they achieved a primacy of place within the theatre of civil discord, begetting and interacting with a range of performative acts along the way. Fighting on the movement's front lines and carving out new spatial configurations within the Taksim area, Gezi's graffiti helped to build a unity of place, itself symbolically inscribed as unshackled and thus autonomous from AKP dominion. They also offered scripts labouring on behalf of a larger ontological cohesion for an otherwise eclectic group of resisters. Obstinate, sharp-tongued, creative and witty, the slogans of the Gezi uprisings also doubled-up as a call to arms: they invited 'spectators of calamities' (Sontag 2003: 18) to reinvent themselves as active participants in revolt, in the process enabling them to perform an insistent form of presence while regaining a semblance of free speech – including the right to mock, curse and insult Erdoğan, itself a defiant act that has landed cartoonists in court and journalists in prison (Reuters 2016; Uras 2015). Daring sloganeering thus formed a key component of Gezi's oral performances, texts and images as these intersected with urban landscapes that were, quite literally, 'up for grabs'.

Echoing their aural emission from living, breathing human bodies, the graffiti of Gezi appeared to come 'alive' during this tense moment of conflict. At times they were added to, yielding encrusted layers of polyphonic messages, while at others municipal cleaning crews censured the sprawled messages by overpainting with a grey pigment, the latter providing a mineral-coloured blank slate for further retaliations and wisecracks. Albeit ephemeral, these stratigraphies of rhetorical conflict came to resemble geological formations – concatenating stone, cement and paint – that bore long-lasting effects. Among them can be counted the calls to resist state-sponsored violence and to hold the regime responsible for various crimes, including the destruction of nature and killing of civilians. These imperatives in graffiti art thus connected the maintenance of physical

integrality with an insistence on environmental health and government accountability.

A ‘peppered’ lingo: youths and soccer fans

The Gezi Movement’s first major wave of graffiti burst onto the streets of Istanbul on Saturday 1 June 2013, the day after the police’s first major attack against demonstrators marching up İstiklal Avenue (Bölükbaşı 2013). The texts hastily sprawled on the walls and pavements clamoured with bravado much like the protesters who refused to back down, instead daring the police to ‘bring it on’ (*hadi gel bakalım!*). In essence, demonstrators were stunned into anger and action by the state’s use of chemical warfare in the cultural and touristic heart of Istanbul. This breakdown in civility and urbanity came as a massive shock, begetting furious chants to resist (*diren!*) and graffiti that called for a ‘chemical’ (*kimyasal*) Erdoğan to resign (*Tayyip istifa!*) (Fig. 5.1).¹ They also called on the ruling AKP and the government (*hükümet*) to resign in a manner reminiscent of the chant ‘the people want the downfall of the regime,’ itself a widespread slogan-graffito during the Arab World uprisings of 2011.



Fig. 5.1 Stencilled graffiti and images representing a gas mask labelled ‘Chemical Tayyip’ (*Kimyasal Tayyip*), a masked demonstrator singing ‘Everyday I’m Chapulin,’ and the imperative ‘Tayyip resign’ (*Tayyip istifa*), Taksim Square, 6th June 2013. Photograph by author.

During the earliest days of June, Gezi graffiti displayed chest-thumping machismo as well as a relishing in the arts of aspersion. Demonstrators reeling from the effects of tear gas hastily scrawled invectives wherever they could, reminding Erdoğan that Gezi Park is 'ours' (*Gezi Parkı bizim!*). Often punctuated by exclamation marks, a number of graffiti using a range of expletives that were as loud-mouthed as they were potty-mouthed. For example, protesters ironically asked the then prime minister 'did we stick [it to you]?' (*koyduk mu?*) and 'did you like it?' (*hoşuna gitti mi?*). Expanding these sexual innuendoes, references to Erdoğan also made use of his first name only – and in an altered form so as to belittle and deride him. Most popular among these were 'Tayyoş' (Tiny Tayyip) and 'Tayyip Bieber' (sardonically combining the word for pepper [*biber*] spray with the name of the heartthrob signer Justin Bieber).

The playful use of expletives and diminutives allowed protesters to mouth off their ire through cultural references ranging from pop music to pornography. This edgy, intrepid and somewhat puerile rhetoric emerged due to various factors, among them the large number of young males who withstood the first police assault and then sprayed Istanbul's walls well into the night. As a symbolic revenge, these men sought to emasculate and feminize Erdoğan, the self-proclaimed *pater familias* of the Turkish Republic. They thus sought revenge through phallic cursing and sodomitical allegories. The grounds for this type of rebellion – in both word and deed – were largely laid by Erdoğan's cultivation of a supremely male personality. As Kurtuluş Korkman and Açıksöz (2013: 38) note in this regard: '[It is] precisely because Erdoğan plays the role of the father, brother, and husband [that] the language of the protesters targets [his] masculinity through swear words that question his penis size, heterosexuality, and impenetrability.' By flipping positions of authority and doing away with gallantries, demonstrators broke with structures of politeness by proudly enunciating taboo words and vulgarities in public.²

Besides this ludic ragging typical of male youth in general, early Gezi slogans and graffiti owed much to Turkish soccer culture in particular. Several of these slogan-graffiti originally thrived in soccer stadiums. For example, the rhetorical question to Erdoğan 'Did we stick it [to you]?' (*koyduk mu?*) was first chanted in stadiums, where it was (and continues to be) directed to an opposing team and its fans upon the successful scoring of a goal – itself easily sexualized as a penetration of sorts. Other rambunctious slogan-graffiti also mimicked soccer melodies and lyrics.³ However, during the Gezi uprisings, the fault lines between soccer fans began to erode as they came together to protect the park, in the process merging into a new supra-identity nicknamed 'Istanbul United' (Irak 2015: 146–7).⁴ Inter-club rivalries were shed as former arch-enemies came together to fight in unison. As a result, the skirmishes of soccer's 'play-sphere' (Huizinga 1949: 164) migrated over to the sloganeering frontlines of the Gezi demonstrations, in effect

uniting erstwhile adversaries into a shared urban field.

Çapulcu, whirling dervishes and media lies

The contents of Gezi's graffiti sounded testosterone-filled during the first day or two of the protests. However, an increasing number of females, feminists and members of the LGBT community – not to mention the prostitutes active in the area who provided shelter and support to the first demonstrators – added their own voices to the mix very quickly. On the walls in Istanbul, feminists stencilled graffiti in pink and purple paint exalting protesters to 'resist not by swearing but by stubbornness' (*küfürle değil inatla diren*) (Tahaoğlu 2013), as they cancelled out graffitied profanities. They also addressed Erdoğan directly, warning him to 'take your hand off my body!' (*elini bedenimden çek!*), itself an angry reaction to his repeated urging of Turkish women to bear at least three children. Adding their voices to the mix, gays, lesbians and transsexuals also came out in full force: they squatted in Gezi Park, held 'lollipop' placards, and inked graffiti on the walls, blithely asking: 'So what that we're fags?' (*velev ki ibneyiz?*). Thrown into the mix were students, artists, Marxists, Kurds and many others from across the spectrum of society. Thus, Gezi's graffiti actively invited individuals to explore new configurations of personhood and place by tattooing pluralism onto the city's fabric.

The responsive graffiti often issued retorts to Erdoğan's dismissive statements about the protesters. Chief among them was his reference to the demonstrators as 'low-life marauders' (*çapulcu*) and individuals belonging to only 'marginal' (*marjinal*) socio-political groups. The terms '*çapulcu*' and '*marjinal*' were gleefully subverted by the protesters, however. For example, one graffiti exclaimed 'Marginal is your mother, Tayyeap!' (*marjinal anandır, Tayyeap!*), while many others made creative use of the base term '*çapul*', most especially the newly coined verb 'to *çapul*', which came to mean 'to resist valiantly'. Through such ludic diversions and neologisms, Gezi demonstrators praised and re-centred the 'marginality of the majority' (De Certeau 1998: 487). Via tactics of reframing, the *çapulcu* sought to marginalize those in power and to re-enfranchise those inhabiting the (purported) *limes* of society.

At that pivotal moment in time, a protester wearing a gas mask was filmed withstanding a heavy police tear gas attack while playfully twirling around, dancing the moonwalk and showing off his disco moves. Uncanny in its conjunction of violence and merriment, the footage catalysed a musical video-collage entitled 'Everyday I'm Çapuling' (inspired by LMFAO's party rock anthem 'Everyday I'm Shuffling') that went viral, spawning graffiti and stencils that, as in Fig. 5.1, included an image of the masked *çapulcu* dancer.⁵ As in other instances of the Gezi demonstrations, this graffiti and its related images revelled in a 'carnivalistic misalliance' (Bakhtin 1998: 251) that

combined both sadness and laughter. The subversive and resilient figure of the demonstrator was thus thrust into a violent matrix, itself reconceptualised as a 'postmodern carnival' that allowed participants to imagine and perform life and politics with a bit of laughter and renewed dignity (Üstündağ 2013: 28; Walton 2015: 54).

A masked dancer who was filmed performing as a whirling dervish in Taksim Square quickly achieved the same status as the *çapulcu* protester, spawning a new series of graffiti and images.⁶ By 4th June, protesters in Gezi Park were busily at work applying stencils to the streets and walls in the area. Besides images of the 'girl in the red dress' and the 'girl in the black dress', the whirling dervish appeared alongside the plea that 'you, too, come' (*sen de gel*) (Fig. 5.2).⁷ Culled from Mevlana's poetry, this Gezi slogan and its spinning dervish essentially offered an open-armed invitation to protesters to not shy away and not give up. Instead, individuals were urged to reassemble, to resist and to twirl away despite all the noxious tear gas. Without a doubt, these graffiti summoned the return of bodies in space while concurrently offering a serious bit of fun within the merry-go-round of conflict.



Fig. 5.2 A young man using a stencil to spray-paint on the ground a masked whirling dervish accompanied by the invitation to protesters that 'you, too, come!' (*sen de gel!*), Gezi Park, 4th June 2013. Photograph by author.

Besides linguistic diversion and the coupling of pain with pleasure, further graffiti engaged in verbal accusation and repudiation – often to the

accompaniment of whimsically belligerent images. The first days of the protests in Gezi Park and the Taksim area were not broadcast on major television channels. Instead of airing footage of the demonstrations, channels like NTV and CNN continued with their regular line-up of shows. In fact, CNN aired a documentary about penguins the night the Gezi uprisings burst onto the streets of Istanbul. It appears that media conglomerates chose to self-censor to a great degree so as not to incur Erdoğan's wrath – and hence risk the revocation of lucrative government contracts in their other sectors of investment. Such silent complicity prompted widespread anger among many individuals, some of whom staged a protest at the headquarters of NTV. Protesters in Taksim Square also trashed an NTV van (Fig. 5.3), scrawling graffiti all over its doors and roof. Among the graffiti could be read: 'partisan media' (*yandaş medya*), 'fag media' (*ibne medya*), 'sold-out media' (*satılmış medya*), 'media for sale by owner' (*sahibinden satılık medya*) and 'mendacious news' (*yalan haber*). Often escorted by penguins outfitted with gas masks and raising their fists in the air (Ming 2013), these graffiti issued a call to rebellion against the status quo, including a corrupt Turkish media that preferred to show Antarctica's waddling wildlife over hordes of protesting citizens.



Fig. 5.3 A damaged NTV van covered in graffiti, Taksim Square, 4th June, 2013. Photograph by author.

Nazi allegories

The polysemic character of the *çapulcu*, whirling dervish and penguin successfully telescoped the miscellaneous make-up of the participants in the Gezi Movement. Indeed, these verbal and iconographic symbols in the public sphere shaped a shared locus, its communicative practices and its collective identity without alienating one particular social, cultural, religious or political group. In other words, Gezi's semiotic terrain was open-ended rather than enclaved, to a certain degree echoing its expanding presence on the ground proper.

A number of texts and images impregnated the battle-torn urban landscape. Some were guided outward rather than inward in an effort to define the 'enemy' and hence also construct the 'self'. As a result, Erdoğan, the AKP and the 'killer police' (*katil polis*) were described essentially as violent aggressors. This strategy of antagonism enabled protesters to sharpen the lines of conflict at a time when the constituency and ideological thrust of the nascent movement was still fragmented and incohesive.

Time and again, opposing political parties and individual protesters unleashed Nazi metaphors against Erdoğan and the AKP in order to paint this conjoint 'enemy' as supremely evil. In their opinion, the current regime's 'fascistic' tendencies were (and remain) evidenced by its record number of journalists in prison, sustained attacks on the rights of women and minorities, decimation of forests and green spaces, parcelling and selling of public land, curbing of alcohol sales and censorship of the Internet (especially Facebook and Twitter). The steady transformation of the Turkish secular constitutional system into a crony-capitalist-Islamist autocracy reached a boiling point in 2013, when protesters decided to stand up and shout out 'shoulder to shoulder against fascism' (*faşizme karşı, omuz omuza*) in Taksim Square, whose secular history was increasingly being erased by Islamist urges (Harmanşah 2014). The popular slogan 'shoulder to shoulder against fascism' quickly turned into banners and graffiti, filling up the streets and squares of Turkish cities. It also was combined with other wall markings, including the graffito 'Nazi AKP' and the light bulb (the AKP's logo) filled with a swastika.

Erdoğan served as the primary target of Nazi allegories. For instance, the leader of the major rival political party (CHP) called him a 'fascist dictator', while a number of cultural leaders compared his rallies to those organized in Nuremberg by Adolf Hitler (BBC News 2013). Those who took to the streets scrawled graffiti on the walls, reading 'fascist Erdoğan' (*faşo Tayyip*) and 'Ugly Mother Führer'. They also painted portraits in which Erdoğan's facial features became indistinguishable from Hitler's. Emblazoned to create an even clearer message, some of these Hitlerian images of the moustachioed Turkish leader showed his forehead imprinted with the swastika or lifting his arm in a 'Heil' salute. A banner made by the nationalist-secularist Turkish Youth Organization (*Türk Gençlik Birliği*) and hung in Gezi Park concatenates these various rhetorical and visual analogies to powerful effect

(Fig. 5.4). The inscription on the banner commands a Hitler-Erdoğan to resign (*Tayyip istifa!*), while a passer-by has inked a message in the first person singular, declaring: 'I am a fascist feudal lord' (*ben faşo ağayım*). A small sign below the banner invites participants in the Gezi Park occupation to rebuild Turkey anew, from within and beyond this small green patch of land.

Among Nazi metaphors, the 'Hitler effect' proves rather hypnotic. It is said that language itself faces a paralysis in the face of supreme evil (Friedländer 1984: 71), hence the usefulness of these types of visual evocations in conjuring up narratives with open meanings. While such Nazi similes proved expedient for Gezi demonstrators, they nevertheless raise important moral issues. Among them is the manipulation of a historical figure personifying depravity and murder, sadism and savagery – thereby generating endless fascination. The ghost of Hitler roams freely in the popular mind through extensions, distortions and various exploitations of Nazi symbolism. Such practices reveal the extent to which the Holocaust has been commodified and turned into a spectacle – that is, a body of discourses, objects and images that Alvin Rosenfeld aptly terms 'Holokitsch' (Rosenfeld 1985: 111–12). In its infancy, the Gezi Movement produced its own corpus of Holokitsch graffiti and images as it searched for a potent, yet ethically suspect, metaphor to construct and combat its adversarial 'other' within its midst.



Fig. 5.4 Banner showing Erdoğan as Hitler raising his arm with the added exclamation 'Tayyip, resign!' (*Tayyip istifa!*), Gezi Park, Istanbul, 10th June 2013. Photograph by author.

‘The Struggle Goes On’

Besides saucy backtalk and Nazi allusions, many other graffiti captured the spirit of Gezi. Some – such as ‘I couldn’t find a slogan’ (*slogan bulamadım*) – evoked the suspension of language in the wake of such violence and confusion. Still others – most memorably, ‘Goddamn certain things’ (*kahrolsun bazı şeyler*) – hinted with ironic nonchalance that the protesters’ list of grievances was simply too long to synopsise into one pithy saying. And yet, to this day, Gezi’s slogan-graffiti continue, proclaiming that, ‘every place is Taksim, every place is resistance’ (*her yer Taksim, her yer direniş*), warning that ‘this is only the beginning, the struggle goes on’ (*bu daha başlangıç, mücadeleye devam*) and promising that ‘we will overcome through resistance’ (*direne direne kazanacağız*). As a kind of ‘necessary crime’ against the status quo (Waclawek 2011: 54–5), these illegal markings promise a ubiquitous presence as well as an epoch-ending moment. While many consider the Gezi uprisings the beginning of the end for Erdoğan and the AKP, what will come next, however, remains to be seen.

Through their stubbornness and ‘intentional deviance’ (Macdonald 2001: 126), Gezi graffiti practices not only catalysed a process of identity building but also place-making, carving out micro-communities from the streets and squares in the Taksim area. In their set-apart yet fleeting environs, many individuals reclaimed presence and meaning, both of which suffered from censure and contempt in official AKP rhetoric. Indeed, through their practices of demonstrating, co-habitation in tented parks, and graffiti and street art, Gezi protesters sought to reclaim the public commons and their rights to the city (Cassano 2013). They did so to no small extent in order to carve out a space for ‘those normally discriminated against, the minorities, the subalterns and the victimized’ (Rivas Alonso 2015: 246). In Gezi Park and well beyond, the marginalized, mis- and under-represented and simply irate achieved a momentary empowerment that breathed new life into Turkish cities, where many resistant bodies and messages clamoured to transcend the deleterious effects of unchecked urban development and the politics of divide-and-conquer.

Section Two

Graffiti and the Wall

Introduction: Graffiti and the Wall

Chiara Salvador

From the modern streets of Taksim, where, in 2013, graffiti played a primary role in the uprisings of Gezi Park by claiming back an area of Istanbul that the Turkish government was forcibly taking away from its citizens, to the ancient streets of Pompeii along which, in the first century AD, people inscribed their greetings, verses and comments on their favourite pastimes: Gruber's and Benefiel's chapters walk us through two urban landscapes embedded into extremely different cultures and societies, but intrinsically connected by the very presence of graffiti, which engage, renegotiate and transform their spaces. *Diren!*, the Turkish word for 'resist!', which became the stencilled motto during the Gezi protests, and *feliciter*, the Latin word for 'be happy', a cheerful greeting that Romans frequently carved on walls to wish their friends or the Emperor well, instantly reveal the huge difference between the sentiments and the circumstances that lie behind these writings. Nonetheless, Gezi's and Pompeii's graffiti are both physical vestiges, no matter how ephemeral or resilient, of a millenia-long cultural practice.

Changing scales and moving away from the geological and urban landscapes – agglomerations of 'meaningful places linked by movements, trajectories, and networks' (Harmanşah, in this volume, p. 19) – analysed in the previous section, Benefiel's chapter on Pompeii brings a smooth transition into a smaller context, that of the wall within buildings, in which interactions are *analysed* – but did not necessarily *happen* – on a reduced scale. In the following section, four chapters analyse graffiti in a variety of human-built contexts that encompass public taverns and private houses in Pompeii, the inner rooms of a prestigious Classic Maya building at Tikal (Guatemala), from which people of the high elite could watch the religious ceremonies that took place in the Great Plaza, as well as the more intimate spaces of funerary structures in New Kingdom Egypt and Roman Palestine. In each of these contexts graffiti assume different meanings and functions, shaped by the society and culture to which they belong. At the same time their presence actively alters the meaning and function of the surfaces onto which they are inscribed, triggering a process of constant negotiation between spaces and identities.

The graffiti in Pompeii give voice to an extraordinarily rich society of

graffitists in which women and men, high-ranking people and slaves, could entrust their thoughts to the walls across the city. Drawings of gladiators, for instance, vividly capture one of the Romans' greatest passions and their wish to share it with their friends and passers-by. Looking at them one can almost hear the animated discussions of people cheering for different athletes and their excitement or disappointment while scratching the outcome of a match on the wall.

Graffiti about gladiators have been found incised both in public areas and in private houses; the same applies to hundreds of other graffiti found across Pompeii. Graffiti were an established form of communication that permeated the life and culture of the people in Pompeii, for both those who created them and those who read and looked at them. Graffiti were not banned by local institutions as they tend to be today, even though not all Pompeians may have valued their presence positively. In the introduction to *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, Baird and Taylor (2011: 1) cite a Pompeian graffiti which provides us with an interesting insight into the contemporary reception of such writings: 'I'm amazed, O wall, that you have not fallen in ruins, you who support the tediousness of so many writers' (*CIL* IV 1904). One wonders whether this complaint referred to the presence of too many graffiti or rather to their poor quality. Perhaps both are correct. Be that as it may, graffiti were probably legitimate and far from being perceived as subversive, as is often the case nowadays.

To assume that all graffiti in antiquity were embraced as a form of communication and were never seen as acts of rebellion would be overly simplistic. As Harmanşah argues in his chapter on rock reliefs in Hittite and Iron Age Anatolia, 'graffiti locate themselves in a realm of transgression and marginality, while at the same time they communicate resilience and hope'. This is especially true for a group of Maya graffiti discovered in the so-called Maler's Palace at Tikal, in Guatemala, which witnesses a possibly subversive attitude of the people who carved and/or commissioned them. The Ruler and Protector trope encapsulates the foundations of rulership at Tikal as being protected and 'sponsored' by a patron deity or a companion spirit. By elaborating on, and deliberately distorting, this traditional iconographic theme, the high elites who resided in this building probably meant to (secretly?) delegitimise their ruler, or at least renegotiate his power. The diminished and caricaturised images of the Tikal ruler and his protector engage in a virtual dialogue with the graffiti at Gezi Park, as well as with many other graffiti covering the walls of the Arab Spring cities. A graffiti painted on a wall in a small village in the area of Jabal al-Zawiya, some 30 kilometres south of Idlib, in Syria, uses defiant language similar to Tikal's graffiti. Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, often referred to as the 'Lion of Syria', is here portrayed as a duck, an allusion to what his wife calls him in private, as disclosed in a leaked private exchange between the couple (see Fig. S2.1).

Graffiti, both textual and pictorial, are a powerful mode of communication. They echo the transient presence of people, their gestures, reflections and spoken words, and transform them into something tangible and durable, if not permanent. Graffiti speak to the surrounding space, establishing transversal dialogues that go beyond space and time regardless of whether they survive for millennia or last just a moment before being whitewashed forever. Their power to activate and establish dialogues takes on different meanings depending on their setting and cultural framework. This becomes all the more clear in Navratilova's and Stern's chapters, which present graffiti in funerary spaces. These transcend the earthly dimension, opening dialogues with the deceased. 'May there be an offering for the *ka* (the soul) of king ...' and 'take courage, holy parents/fathers, no one is immortal!'. These two examples, both inscribed by people visiting tombs, belong to different cultures and religious beliefs. The former exemplifies the typical formula inscribed in a royal Egyptian tomb in Memphis, through which the soul of the (long) departed ruler is nourished and sustained in his afterlife through prayers and material or recited offerings of food and beverages. The latter is an inscription carved in the Jewish catacomb of Beit Shearim, in Roman Palestine, which directly addresses the dead, reassuring them that they are not alone and that sooner or later everyone will join them. Once again, graffiti speak to a wide community of living and deceased as well as to one another, breaking cultural and religious borders. In both case studies, graffiti inscribe themselves in a much wider spectrum of practices and modes in order to express piety to their dead. The people who left these graffiti, single individuals or groups of visitors, probably whispered, recited or sang prayers, performed dramatic lamentations and/or poured libations, likely wishing their dead – and themselves – well.



Fig. S2.1 Bashar al-Assad and other members of his family depicted as ducks in a graffito in Jabal al-Zawiya. Photo taken on 20th October 2012 and published on Flickr by Freedom House (<http://tinyurl.com/zz5nyas> [accessed 11th December 2016]).

Placing graffiti into their broader cultural frameworks and understanding them as part of a wide range of modes of expression may help overcome the widespread idea of a second-class epigraphic category. By adopting such a perspective, even pictorial graffiti can be rehabilitated. They are no longer the uneducated choice of less-educated people but the deliberate choice of literate individuals, such as was probably the case in Pompeii and Tikal.

Gladiators, Greetings and Poetry: Graffiti in First Century Pompeii

Rebecca R. Benefiel

The eruption of Mt Vesuvius in AD 79 obliterated life in nearby Pompeii, but ensured the preservation of fragile material such as wall-plaster, allowing us a glimpse into how filled with writing an ancient city might be. With its exceptional preservation, Pompeii provides a basis for understanding daily life under the Roman Empire. Two thirds of the ancient city (44 hectares) have been excavated. Nowhere else do we have acre after acre of public and residential buildings that are so well preserved. More than 100 city-blocks have yielded thousands of ancient graffiti at Pompeii. These handwritten wall inscriptions capture a culture of spontaneous written expression, conveying the thoughts and interests of those who inhabited and passed through this city some 1,900 years ago.

Pompeii, therefore, offers a spectacular look at the vibrant culture of public writing and reading that took place during the early Roman Empire. In this chapter, I first present a brief overview of the cultural practice of writing graffiti in Pompeii. I then discuss what makes these graffiti culturally distinct by exploring how these writings illuminate Roman culture and the society that produced them. To do so, I highlight three particular topics: gladiators, greetings and poetry, which characterize Roman graffiti and distinguish it as culturally different from graffiti of other times and places.

The cultural practice of writing graffiti

Wall inscriptions began to be documented in Pompeii in the second half of the nineteenth century, more than a century after excavations had begun. Although early discoveries disappeared before they were recorded and nearly one-third of the city remains unexcavated, Pompeii has yielded a mass of writing. More than 11,000 wall inscriptions have been documented so far, indicating that there must have been a tremendous amount of writing taking place in this ancient town. The wall inscriptions at Pompeii take two forms: painted inscriptions (*dipinti*), and inscriptions scratched into wall-plaster (*graffiti*). The painted inscriptions communicate information of a

public nature, similar to billboards or posters today. They were painted by teams of workers (Franklin 1978) in large letters high up on the wall along busy streets and were designed to reach a large audience. They contain information for public consumption, including hundreds of endorsements for political candidates and announcements of gladiatorial games (cf. Franklin 2001).

The graffiti, by contrast, comprise handwritten messages, and could be composed by any literate individual who had a sharp implement and the desire to write something. They occur not only in public spaces but also in workshops, taverns, shops and even private houses across the entire city. The plaster that covered buildings inside and out provided a ready surface for Pompeians to write messages that could be read by others. The term 'graffiti', in fact, originated in the mid-nineteenth century, as excavations of Roman ruins proceeded to uncover more and more of these handwritten texts, lightly scratched into the plaster of ancient buildings. The Italian noun *graffio*, or 'scratch', was turned into an adjective to describe these inscriptions, *iscrizioni graffite* (Avellino 1841; Ross 1877: 263). Only a century later did the term graffiti come to be more broadly applied to any informal writing on walls (Gorrell 2001: 77).

A major difference between the graffiti of Pompeii and that of other cultures is their size and visual impact. Ancient graffiti tend to be discreet and unobtrusive. They are generally small, sometimes minute, with examples smaller than 0.5 cm in height, while ancient graffiti are rarely taller than 3 cm (Benefiel 2010, 2016b). They do not run across decorative elements, rather, they show a certain respect for wall decoration and for the space taken up by other graffiti. Another difference between ancient and modern examples is the wide swathe of society involved in writing and reading graffiti in Pompeii (cf. Franklin 1991). Leading citizens and slaves, male and female, inhabitants and visitors to the town all engaged in writing and reading graffiti. For example, in the House of D. Lucretius, a magistrate who sponsored gladiatorial spectacles for the city, a graffito applauds him and his children (*CIL* IV 8497b), while over by the theatre, a female slave inscribes a prayer to Venus, entreating the goddess to bless her and her beloved (*CIL* IV 2457). Along with the diverse backgrounds of the individuals who inscribed messages, the content of graffiti at Pompeii is wide-ranging. The inscriptions comprise greetings, word games, notes, quotations of poetry, tally marks, drawings and more. I have chosen to highlight three particular topics: gladiators, greetings and poetry, which characterize the graffiti of this time period and illuminate the cultural practice of writing on the wall in ancient Pompeii. This type of content is not often found among the graffiti of other cultures, but it certainly speaks to that of the early Roman Empire.

Gladiators

Gladiators remain one of the most potent symbols of ancient Rome. Romans commented on their own fascination with the sport. The satirist Juvenal refers to a woman who abandoned her family and high rank to run away with a gladiator (Juv. 6.82–113). Amphitheatres were built in towns and cities across the Empire to host games and gladiatorial spectacles (Golvin 1998; Tosi 2003). Art featuring gladiators appeared in both public and private spaces and in every type of medium, from paintings and mosaics to terracotta figurines and oil lamps (Jacobelli 2003).¹

Two sets of graffiti provide an example of the fascination that Romans held for gladiators and how closely they followed the successes of individual athletes. One set appeared on a funerary monument outside the city walls, the other within a well-appointed house. Together, these offer a glimpse into how Pompeians might have used graffiti to communicate and share an interest in the major sport of their time.

The first, including multiple drawings and texts, was drawn on a funerary monument outside the city walls, south of the town. The roads that led into any Roman town were lined with funerary monuments, a place outside the city to bury the dead and to represent one's achievements. Shade, seats and shelter among these monuments provided a place for travellers to pause and rest on their journey before entering the town. This monument stood outside the Nocera Gate, a well-trafficked area connecting Pompeii to points south. Other graffiti are found here, alongside painted inscriptions that endorsed candidates running for political office and even a lost horse (CIL IV 3864).

The set of graffiti sketched here commemorate a series of gladiatorial matches (CIL IV 10236–10238).² A central scene (see Fig. 6.1) provides numerous details, including a group of musicians, while labels describe the event: four days of gladiatorial games held in the city of Nola, sponsored and paid for by a Marcus Cominius (Coleman 1999).³ The drawings represent pairs of gladiators: Marcus Attilius vs Hilarus, Hilarus vs Creunus, and Marcus Attilius vs Lucius Raecius Felix. Labels above the figures allow us to reconstruct the order of events. First, Hilarus, a *Neronianus* – a gladiator trained at the imperial training school, fought Creunus and won. This was Hilarus' fourteenth victory. Then, he fought Marcus Attilius and lost. Marcus Attilius then fought Lucius Raecius Felix notching up another victory.

The labels shed light on why this would have been such an exciting spectacle. As a *Neronianus*, Hilarus would have been trained at the imperial gladiatorial training school in Capua. Although most gladiators were slaves, they received extensive training; matches involved not only a show of strength but also tactical prowess. Gladiators were highly skilled athletes, and each was trained in a particular fighting style. A gladiator would be matched against an opponent with different equipment, so that a *retarius*

with his trident and net had the advantage at a distance, yet in closer combat had little defence against an opponent equipped with a sword. Gladiators learned to fight with the advantages that their particular style offered. As a gladiator from the imperial training school, Hilarus would have had longer and more thorough training than his opponents; the graffito shows that he is accomplished, with fourteen victories to his name. Yet, he loses his next match to Marcus Attilius who is labelled a *t(iro)*, or novice. That designator meant this was his first appearance in the arena. What an upset this must have been, for a brand-new gladiator in his first match to defeat a premier, imperially trained athlete!



Fig. 6.1 CIL IV.10237. Line-drawing by Matteo Della Corte.

Another set of gladiator graffiti appears inside a well-appointed house, the House of the Ceii. In a hallway facing the garden, roughly at eye level, a graffito depicts four gladiators (CIL IV.8055–8056, see Fig. 6.2). Each is labelled with his name – Oceanus, Aracintus, Severus and Albanus – and his record of wins. Here, the graffito visually communicates the outcome of the match; the defeated gladiator still stands, but his shield lies on the ground. The texts identify each gladiator with the letter ‘L’ for *l(ibertus)*, or freedman, indicating that these gladiators were no longer slaves and nevertheless had decided to enter the arena. This may well have made the match more exciting for spectators. Another surprise comes with Albanus, the victor of the second vignette, who is labelled with ‘SC’ for *sc(aevus)*, or ‘left-handed’ (Coleman 1996). Since the majority of gladiators would have been right-handed and would have trained against right-handed athletes, Albanus would have had the advantage in a match; his dexterity required opponents to alter their strategy. The writer who inscribed the graffito considered it worth noting with the label of *sc(aevus)*, and in the drawing where Albanus holds his sword in his left hand. It was very uncommon and may have heightened the tension at the spectacle. Albanus is the only left-handed athlete among all the graffiti depicting gladiators in Pompeii.

The main difference between these two sets of graffiti, one posted in a

public space, the other within a private home, is the certainty of the hand creating them. The set of graffiti on the tomb appears to have been sketched quickly. The drawings were sometimes interrupted and then begun again; the text is sometimes slanted and uneven. In the House of the Ceii, by contrast, a very careful hand has drawn small figures and centred the text relating to each directly above the image. Beyond the varying familiarity each writer had with drawing and writing, however, the graffiti are depicting the same type of content.



a) OCEANVS.LXIIII



b) ARACINTVS.LXIIII



c) MILETARIO



Fig. 6.2 Graffito depicting gladiators in the House of the Ceii. Su concessione del Ministero di Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Soprintendenza Pompei. Reproduction expressly prohibited.

In both instances, care is given to depict accurately the type of equipment each gladiator is carrying. Hilarus, for example, wears a crested helmet in both of his depictions and carries a mid-length rectangular shield. Both his opponents wear a helmet with a single feather, but carry different gear; Creunus fought with a small circular shield, while Marcus Attilius' was full length. In the House of the Ceii, cross-hatching represents the protective gear of the arm and shin guards worn by the gladiators. The graffiti reveal a

close familiarity with the individual athletes. Not only does the writer know the names and records of gladiator, he knows their fighting style and how this differs from his opponent. These audience members were not sitting in the amphitheatre watching the games as general sport; they were watching and likely cheering for the individual athletes.

We also learn that the Pompeians who adored these spectacles and sketched them on the walls were not focusing on the bloody outcome of the event. In fact, the details of the graffiti make clear that the gladiators who were defeated at Nola were spared (*missus*) and not killed (*perit*). While gladiatorial fights could end in death, particularly in the capital, where ever-greater entertainment as required, in smaller towns like Pompeii, a defeated gladiator appears to have had a decent chance of survival.

These are just two of the many gladiator graffiti in Pompeii. Sometimes figures which are depicted without labels may signal a general interest in the games. The examples we have just considered, however, point to a particular moment in time and a particular match. Had the person who sketched out the details of the gladiator spectacle at Nola attended it in person? The city was only 25 km away. He could have been a Pompeian who had been in Nola and was relaying the excitement of the event to friends when he returned home, or a visitor from Nola who wanted to tell others about the thrilling match he had seen. By creating a graffiti, he was able to communicate this giant upset. The graffiti in the House of the Ceii instead probably illustrate events a viewer had seen at Pompeii. Perhaps the writer was proud to boast he had witnessed that particular match. The gladiator Oceanus also appears in a graffiti in the House of the Labyrinth (*CIL* IV.1422), but there he only had six wins to his name, in contrast to the thirteen he had acquired by the time of his match against Aracintus. Gladiators would perform in different cities, and therefore perhaps it was particularly exciting when Oceanus returned to perform in Pompeii.

Gladiatorial spectacles were not held very often; when they did occur, it was big news. Gladiatorial games were advertised and spectators might travel some distance to attend (Benefiel 2016a; Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980; Tac. *Ann.* IV.62–63). These graffiti can show us how exciting it was to watch the games from the spectators point of view. There was clearly a shared visual language, with a focus on the type of equipment gladiators carried. There was also a close familiarity with the athletes themselves and their successes. When a brand-new gladiator in his first combat defeated the imperially trained *Neronianus*, the graffiti writer may have sketched out the scene to share the exciting news with others, friends who were present as he recounted the details or who may have passed by and stopped at their usual resting spot before continuing on their travels. These graffiti reveal how Pompeians might communicate about a major social event in their world.

Greetings

If gladiators mark a very *Roman* way of writing graffiti, then the category of greetings marks a very *human* way of writing graffiti. Roman culture flavours the way Pompeians greet and address each other. Two main points are particularly relevant: (1) ancient Roman graffiti were anything but anonymous; and (2) Pompeians appear to have been quite a friendly bunch.

One of the basic characteristics associated with modern graffiti is anonymity. Not so in Pompeii. Personal names comprise the largest percentage of ancient graffiti (Langner 2001: 21–6). The names themselves often stand alone, markers of one's presence and ability to write (cf. Benefiel 2008). Greetings take second place. Friends are named and directly addressed with 'hello', 'take care', or 'bye'. The quantity of greetings across the city makes clear that writing graffiti was a very social exchange. It strengthened and publicized bonds between individuals in a familiar and friendly way.

Latin students often start class with the salutation, *Salve magistra!* Pompeian graffiti contain several instances of this address: *Salve filia!* ('Hello, daughter'), *Salve Vitali!* ('Hello, Vitalis') (CIL IV.2173, 8072). Yet this was not the only way to say hello: graffiti use *salvēre* ('to be healthy'), or employ the noun *salutem*. The convention may have derived from letter-writing, where the writer sends greetings (literally 'gives health') to the addressee (e.g. *Cicero Attico salutem dat*). The graffiti almost always present simply the names of writer and addressee followed by *salutem* (e.g. *Optata Secundo suo salutem* ('Optata to her Secundus, greetings' CIL IV.6755)). The term appears so frequently among graffiti and in such simple messages that it is clear that Pompeians were not thinking about letter-writing – they were just saying 'hi'. One could wish someone the very best with a phrase like *plurimam salutem*, as occurs in an exuberant exchange between brothers at the House of Fabius Rufus: *Secundus Onesimo fratri suo p[lu]rimam perpetuamque salutem* ('Secundus, lots of greetings forever and ever, to his brother Onesimus'), *Onesimus ... Secundo plurimam amabiliter salutem* ('Onesimus ... to Secundus, lots of greetings, with love') (Giordano 1966: nos. 9–10, 13).

Even more popular was the variation on this address: *sal*, an abbreviation of *salutem*. Eleven graffiti contain the imperative greeting with *salve* or its plural *salvete*. More than thirty convey a greeting with *salutem*. By contrast, around 100 individual graffiti at Pompeii use the abbreviation *sal*.⁴ This very common expression was the equivalent of 'hi', but could also be part of a longer message. An imperial slave visited Pompeii and wrote his greetings to the entire town with great enthusiasm:

*Poliaeus Aug(usti) cubic(u)larius Marsus hic et ubique sa[lutem]
[sa]n[cti]ssimae coloniae et populo Pompeieno
ubique sal(utem)*

'Poliaeus, the bedroom attendant of the emperor, from central Italy, says hi, here and everywhere, to the most worthy town (literally, to the most sacred colony) and to the Pompeian people. Hi everywhere!'

The imperative of *valēre* ('to be strong') was another way to send greetings to a friend. Graffiti exhorting 'take care' or 'fare well' were written to both men and women, and seem to have been addressed exclusively to individuals rather than to groups. As with *salutem*, the greeting *vale* was frequently abbreviated. It might be shortened to *val(e)*, perhaps on the model of the abbreviation *sal*, but much more often it was shortened to just two letters: *va(le)*, usually in a short message, e.g.: *Niobida va(le)*, *Mnester va(le)*, *Gloriose va(le)* (CIL IV.1800, 1862, 2012). The main difference between greetings of *salutem* and *vale* was structural; *salutem* greetings named both writer and addressee, while *vale* greetings named only the addressee. More than 250 instances of the greeting *vale* have been found on the walls of Pompeii so far, most abbreviated to *va(le)*.⁵

Another way to send warm greetings to a friend is an acclamation that has no modern-day equivalent: *feliciter*, or 'be happy!' A literal translation is: 'may things go happily for so-and-so.' We might translate *Augusto feliciter* as, 'Long live the emperor!' or *Iustae feliciter* as 'Good wishes for Iusta!' But the root of *feliciter* is the adjective *felix*, meaning 'happy' or 'lucky', which a general sentiment of good wishes does not capture.

There are more than 100 instances of this expression at Pompeii. This phrase reflected spoken communication. An appearance by the emperor could inspire chants and acclamations of *feliciter* (Suet. *Dom.* 3), and, even in his absence, the emperor might be wished well this way. The protagonists of the *Cena Trimalchionis* wonder about special cakes and, guessing them sacred, jump up and exclaim: *Augusto, pater patriae, feliciter!* ('Long live the emperor, father of the fatherland!' Petronius, *Sat.* 60). The wish could be addressed to others too. Earlier in the evening, after a particularly clever presentation of sausages, the diners acclaim the host with the shout: *Gaio feliciter!* ('Hooray for Gaius!' Petronius, *Sat.* 50). Wedding celebrations also routinely included the wish of *feliciter* (Glazebrook and Olson 2014; Hersch 2010: 150–1).

In Pompeii, these shouts of 'Hooray!' and 'Be happy!' made it onto the walls of the town, resonating their wishes throughout the city. Many are addressed to individuals; others are directed at groups, even entire towns (*Coloniae Puteolanae feliciter*, 'Happy things for the colony of Puteoli'; *omnibus Pompeianis feliciter* 'Hooray for all the Pompeians!' CIL IV.4262, 7343). One graffito wishes happiness for those of good will: *Ben{ }volentibus felic{ }ter!* (CIL IV.1326). A number of painted inscriptions also applaud the emperor and his 'decisions' with *feliciter* (Benefiel 2004; Mouritsen and Gradel 1991):

Iudicii Augusti Augustae feliciter! Vobis salvis felices sumus perpetuo.

'Hooray for the decisions of the emperor and empress. With you both safe and sound, we are happy forever.'

Mention of the empress suggests the couple is Nero and Poppaea, who herself hailed from this area, while the decisions applauded so widely appear to have been rescinding a ban on gladiatorial games implemented a few years earlier (Franklin 2001: 119–23; Mouritsen and Gradel 1991:151–3; Tac. *Ann.* XIV.17).

Modern graffiti often include insults, but positive sentiments were much more common. Only two graffiti in Pompeii carry a wish of *infeliciter*. These two identical messages on a tomb outside the Nocera Gate were used to curse a certain Rarus: *Raro infeliciter* (CIL IV.10243a, b). On the same tomb, negative wishes are directed at Rarus with different sentiments: ‘May things turn out badly for Gaius Rarus’ (C. *Raro male eveniat*, CIL IV.10243h). The message is then directed at Macer (*Macro male eveniat*, CIL IV.10243j). This cluster of negativity is very unusual – this tomb is the only place in Pompeii where such phrases are found. The verb *eveniat* appears in one other graffito, where positive wishes are repeatedly declared: ‘Good wishes (*bene*) for Felicula, good wishes (*bene*) for Daphnicus. May things turn out well (*bene eveniat*) for both of them’ (CIL IV.4477). Who knows how Rarus and Macer had generated such anger or why the person mad with them chose to express himself here? This monument shows that it was possible to express negative wishes in graffiti, but that was clearly not the social convention in Pompeii. Rather, greetings appear to have been overwhelmingly positive and friendly, public declarations of good wishes and shared relationships.

Poetry

Another distinctive feature of graffiti in first-century Pompeii is the prevalence of inscribed verses of poetry. Unattributed quotations of both literature and popular epigrams are inscribed repeatedly across the city – no *author is known* (Gigante 1979).⁶ The best-represented poet is Vergil, author of the *Aeneid*. As one might expect, the opening words of his epic poem (*arma virumque cano*, ‘I sing of arms and the man ...’) are frequently inscribed (cf. Milnor 2009), but the phrase that begins the second book of the *Aeneid* is just as popular: *conticuere* (‘they fell silent’). This quotation, attested fourteen times, slightly edges out *Aen.* I.1, whose opening words are attested only twelve times. Vergil’s other works are also quoted on the walls of Pompeii, as are other poets, particularly Propertius and Ovid (Cooley and Cooley 2014: 292–3).⁷

Verses of poetry often appear in clusters; it would seem that a reference to a well-known poem or verse might have inspired others to add their own contributions. Examples of this tendency for poetic verses to cluster can be found in several locations, including the basilica, the tavern of Euxinus (Jashemski 1967) and the House of Maius Castricius (Benefiel 2010a). The

series in the basilica illustrate how graffiti might work in dialogue with each other.

The basilica, a law court and large, multi-purpose building on the town's forum, featured more than 200 graffiti when Vesuvius overwhelmed the city. The quantity was so great that early in the excavations the decision was made to remove nineteen large panels of graffiti-laden plaster to the National Archaeological Museum at Naples (*CIL* IV, p. 113). One of these panels holds a number of poetic graffiti, arranged in a sort of series, one above the other. Their visual appearance marks them as associated; each inscription presents two lines of text of comparable length (Benefiel 2012). The handwriting differs; many writers contributed to this group.

The group begins with a four-line graffito that combines verses of Propertius and Ovid and quotes them together. Two elegiac couplets are written in one hand as a set, with the pentameters indented and flourishes for the initial letters of each line (see Fig. 6.3). Both couplets treat the theme of the *exclusus amator*, the lover who remains shut outside and separated from his beloved. The inscription (*CIL* IV.1893–4) reads:

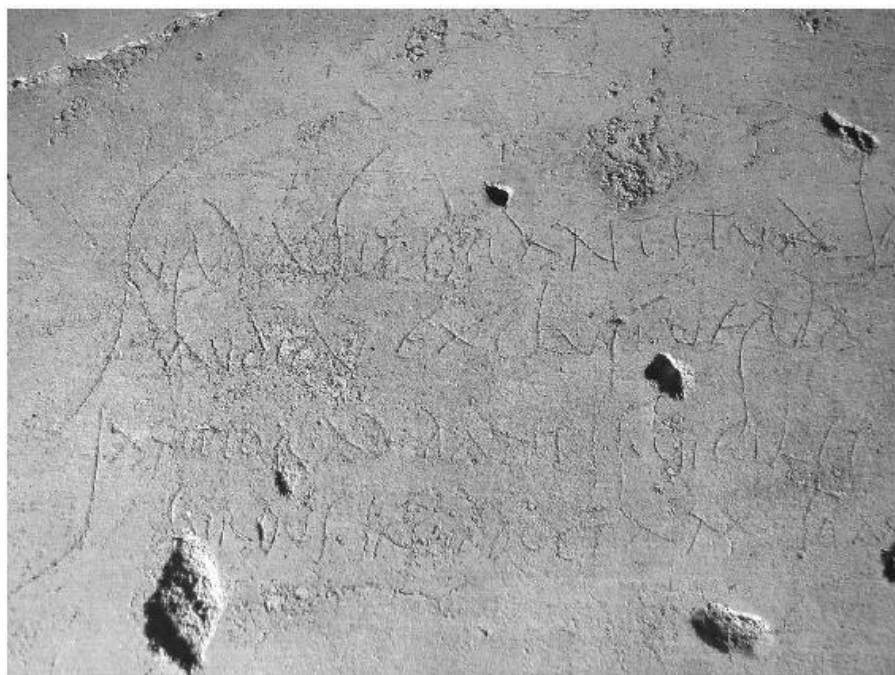


Fig. 6.3 Poetic verses in the basilica. Su concessione del Ministero di Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Soprintendenza Napoli. Reproduction expressly prohibited.

'May your door be deaf to the one who is pleading, but open to the one who brings (gifts). May the lover who has been received hear the words of the one left outside.

May the door-keeper keep watch through the night for those giving (gifts). If someone knocks empty-handed, let him continue sleeping, deaf to the sound, on the locked bolt.'s

Directly below this graffito appears a message in a different hand with a quotation from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (1.475–6). This subsequent writer did not have a strong grasp of Ovid's original. Instead, he had an idea of what he wanted to write and scrambled the first few words, even if the verse was still recognizable. The opening phrase was: *quid pote(st) tan durum saxso* (literally, 'What can be so hard than a rock?'), which is close to Ovid's original: *quid magis saxo durum* ('What is more hard than a rock?'). The remainder of the graffito represents Ovid faithfully: 'What is softer than water? Yet hard rocks are hollowed out by soft water' (CIL IV.1895).

These, then, inspired other additions, with messages in different handwriting below the preceding verses. The next inscription resembles the others visually, with two lines in cursive lettering. Yet no literary original is identifiable, and indeed humour may have been the motivation. This writer inscribes:

'When the ham is cooked, if it is placed before the guest,
he does not taste the ham. He licks the bowl or the pan.'

CIL IV.1896

The layout of the poem looks the same as the quotations that preceded it, but the reader soon encounters the tastiness of ham, a twist that may have elicited a laugh. Perhaps wit was what this author was aiming for. Other verses follow, one about being burned in love ('Whoever loves ought not to use hot springs, for no one who has been burned can love flames', CIL IV.1898), and another about a rhetor. Graffiti are generally brief and few are as long as two lines. At this spot in the basilica, though, twelve lines are inscribed in a concentrated series of literary output.

Other poems reveal the flexibility Pompeians enjoyed in personalizing and making well-known epigrams their own. Another elegiac couplet was written in the House of Caecilius Iucundus (CIL IV.4091):

*quis amat valeat, pereat qui
nescit amare; bis tanto pereat
quisquis amare vetat*

'Whoever loves, may he fare well.
May he who knows not how to love perish.
May he perish twice over, whoever forbids love.'

Elsewhere, people wrote out just the beginning of the verse. With variations, this poem appears fifteen times at Pompeii. Some writers inverted the sentiment to: 'Whoever loves, may he perish,' while a graffito in the basilica conveys a longer variation. It clearly takes *quisquis amat* as its inspiration only to change the message completely:

'Whoever loves, let him come (*quisquis amat veniat*). I want to break Venus'
ribs with clubs and incapacitate the loins of the goddess.

If she can pierce a hole through my tender heart,
why can't I break her head with a club?"

CIL IV. 1824

The poem was used as a flourish to conclude another epigram in the House of Maius Castricius.⁹ It was slightly modified in a message about love for a certain Leda (CIL IV.9202) and personalized to serve as a message of welcome in the House of the Four Styles, where a message inscribed in elegant lettering greeted visitors: *Quos LVP amat valeant* ('Welcome to those whom L(ucius) V. P. loves'; Benefiel 2011) (fig. 6.4). The epigram even appeared in a wall painting, written in infinitesimally small letters on a scroll depicted in a still-life of writing implements (CIL IV.1173).¹⁰ The author is unknown, but this elegiac couplet was clearly popular throughout town and beyond.¹¹

Conclusions

Altogether the graffiti of Pompeii communicate the interests of those writing and their engagement with the world around them. A fascination with gladiators is specific to Roman culture, which featured this entertainment as one of the major events of the year. Yet even the way Pompeians publicly greet each other – with friendly, overwhelmingly positive wishes – seems to be culturally framed. The quotation of poetry likewise speaks to a people eager to show off knowledge and to express themselves. Graffiti in this small town of the early Roman Empire do not confront those in power (for dissent at Rome, cf. Zadorojnyi 2011); they are not destructive, nor is their aim to deface; they do not seek to appropriate space. They are discreet and they are everywhere, in public and private spaces, from the law courts to houses and tombs. And it was the local environment that inspired these messages: what people were watching, reading or hearing, as well as those friends, family members and visitors with whom they had frequent contact.



Fig. 6.4 Location of the message '*Quos LVP amat valeant*' in the House of the Four Styles. Su concessione del Ministero di Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Soprintendenza Pompei. Reproduction expressly prohibited.

Graffiti are a written form of communication, but the Romans were famously known to read aloud; Pompeian graffiti were clearly part of an oral social exchange. Greetings could be read aloud, while the statistics of gladiators might inspire discussions and the opening lines of poems could serve as a challenge for recitation. These graffiti are social in nature, and context shows that they were being written and read. The messages on the wall were part of a conversation; the fact that they were written in so many places and with so many different sentiments reveals that this was a large conversation that involved much of Pompeian society, a society and culture in the first century AD that embraced the act of writing.

A New Look at Maya Graffiti from Tikal

Elizabeth Olton

Ancient graffiti found in palace structures from the Central Acropolis of the Maya city of Tikal, c. 600–800 AD, provide scholars with an alternative historic voice either, parallel to or in contrast with archaeology and hieroglyphic inscriptions. Markings incised on the interior stucco walls of ancient Maya structures have been documented since the late nineteenth century, but their chronology and meaning have been in question for decades. These graffiti have been found in the elite sanctuaries or palaces; these are rarefied spaces, occupied by members of the ruling dynasty and other leaders. The iconography of graffiti from Maler's Palace, scratched on the walls of a semi-private room, suggests that not all members of the elite agreed with the prevailing state-sponsored narrative seen in art and experienced in public ceremony. The archaeology, architectural decoration and carved inscriptions from the Great Plaza at Tikal describe the ruler as robust and divine; graffiti from a nearby palace present a portrait of the king as diminutive and simple. Although subtle, the graffiti depict dissenting views of the ruler's authority that illustrate *sub rosa* (under-the-surface) rumblings among select elites. Room 9 within Maler's Palace, also known as Structure 5D-65, has an unusual number of graffiti depicting the Ruler and Protector theme, which will be the focus of this chapter.

Understanding the lived experience of the ancient Maya through artefactual remains found in the open areas of plazas and courtyards is often difficult (Tsukamoto and Inomata 2014: 9). However, when the associated graffiti are also examined, a more complete, albeit complex, view of the Maya comes to light. Ancient Maya graffiti provide us with an intimate perspective, reflecting diverse opinions and anecdotal accounts of the Maya elite. Some scholars have viewed these marks as ancient and calculated expressions, recording witnessed events and unofficial histories (Hutson 2011; Mayer, 2009; Olton 2015a; Vidal and Muñoz 2009; Walker 1959; Webster 1963; Žralka 2014). These seemingly sketched images are in stark contrast to canonical Maya art, yet they often depict subjects of an elite, historical nature. Palace rooms were sequestered spaces with an array of stuccoed surfaces used as slates on which to incise drawings. Often, they are seen as imagery 'out of history': thoughtless doodlings, the results of narcotic trances, expressions of children, or the work of post-Classic (900–1500 AD)

wandering squatters (Haviland and Haviland 1995, Hutson 2011, Kampen 1987, Thompson 1954:25). Yet, when these graffiti are examined closely, the creators appear to be depicting scenes of aesthetic canons, costumes and ritual traditions. By closely studying and documenting this imagery from Tikal, a more inclusive portrait of Classic Maya culture emerges. Graffiti from Maler's Palace in Room 9 reflect the messiness of political relationships, even under the aegis of a divine ruler.

Context

As a form of recording witnessed events, ancient Maya graffiti *reinterpreted* history through the act of scratching on walls; the graffitist *transformed* constructed environments, an act that reflected some degree of initiative on the part of the elite class. Understanding the context of graffiti is vital in any interpretation of their meaning, as socio-linguist Dürmüller (1988) observed when looking at spray can art from the 1980s, stating that the surface on which these images appear is part of their 'semantic structure'. Palace compounds were intensely social places; at Tikal, elite residences were constructed around open plazas. Maler's Palace is adjacent to the Great Plaza, a huge open space bordered by royal funerary monuments and elite residences (Temples 1 and 2, Central Acropolis). Palaces were complex quasi-private spaces, used for official meetings of elites and as a sanctuary (Harrison and Andrews 2004; Inomata 2006; Inomata and Houston 2001; Tsukamoto and Inomata 2014). Maler's Palace was one of the most important compounds for the aristocracy during the Late Classic period because of its size and close proximity to the ceremonial centre of Tikal.

Maler's Palace is a large and expansive building referred to technically as a 'range structure'. The Palace's horizontal design emphasized mass and volume and is one of the few buildings of the Central Acropolis with a second storey and an elevated portico. This distinctive building was designed as a luxurious retreat, with its façade looking out onto Court 2, while the back of the structure sits on an embankment overlooking a freshwater reservoir below. The interior is composed of a labyrinth of chambers with several 'throne' rooms defined as such due to the masonry benches in niches. The intricate layout of this mixed-use building can be seen in the rendition from 1911 produced by Maler (see Fig. 7.1), which remains accurate today. The resident of this palace is unknown, but its size, proximity to fresh water, second storey and its sight-lines to the south and north, including Temples 1 and 2, indicate that it was home to a person or family of the highest elite.

Palaces and their associated plazas were the hub of social activities and ritual; this interplay between public and private spaces can be seen in the form and design of Maler's Palace. The first storey contains nine rooms, although stuccoed chambers are found in the second storey and some still

contain graffiti, these spaces and their incised imagery are in a ruined state. The façade is symmetrical; its first storey is punctuated by three post-and-lintel doorways. These doors lead to (from left to right or east to west) rooms 1, 2 and 9, which are located on the far right or west side of the façade. The three rooms open onto an elevated terrace, which served as a platform for viewing events performed in Court 2.

The private and often dark rooms of Maya buildings were favourable environments for what Lester Walker (1959: 193) describes as ‘markings that reflect ideas of a personal nature’. Maler’s Palace contains many chambers: some are quite secluded, while others are more accessible. The corbel-vaulted ceiling, wall niches and narrow interior space provide only a dappled light, leaving portions of the room in shadow. A variety of surfaces were used by the graffitists, including niches, built-in benches and secluded alcoves, all having been plastered in stucco, which afforded a clean and relatively soft surface on which to incise imagery. In Room 9, the Ruler and Protector images are generally organized on the east side of the chamber, immediately to the left of the entrance, clustered around a smooth masonry bench framed by a shallow wall niche.¹ The context of these drawings suggests that a viewer could easily study the graffiti because they were at eye-level and near a bench, but their discrete location allowed shadows to obscure much of this imagery during the day. In addition, woven fabrics and tapestries may have been hung over the doors and along the walls, creating an interior environment that was both sumptuous and private (Harrison and Andrews 2004) as well as one that may have concealed subversive messages.²

Style and subject

At the turn of the twentieth century, explorer Teobert Maler was quite taken by the many graffiti he encountered in the palace structures from Tikal. Significantly, Maler chose to draw and publish versions of the Ruler and Protector graffiti from Room 9 (Maler 1911: 58–62). He considered ancient Maya graffiti to be odd, but he also recognized their visual impact, because he compared these images to comparative illustrations from the Dresden Codex, a painted fan fold book from the Maya (Maler 1911: 60). Scholars have also compared the spontaneity and calligraphic quality of graffiti to imagery painted on polychrome vessels (Walker 1959; Webster 1963). Without a vibrant palette of colour, graffiti rely on the quality of the incised line and texture, otherwise they appear almost invisible.

In the middle of the twentieth century, art historian Lester Walker (1959: 197–9) expanded on Maler's investigation of the palace graffiti with a thoughtful analysis which suggested that the imagery was private and probably included caricatures of 'elite types' and perhaps even examples of satire.³ Walker focused on what he saw, rather than comparing the scenes with other forms of Maya art, such as inscriptions, mural painting and sculpture. He correctly labelled the graffiti an alternative form of communication, not one created by inferior artists (Walker 1959: 198). Webster (1963) and Andrews (1999), suggest the subjects of graffiti from Tikal and elsewhere were inspired by life at court. Walker (1959: 197) also noticed a sense of immediacy that revealed direct knowledge of the gestures, costumes and rituals of the Maya elite. Many examples show elites in extravagant regalia engaged in public performance, but a number also depict more private representations of life at court. In contrast to other forms of Maya art, the graffiti constitute an intimate and spontaneous expression created by an elite community in dialogue with itself.

The majority of subjects depicted in these incised marks relate to the official narratives of the ancient Mayan visual canon. In general, Maya graffiti, in Maler's Palace and elsewhere, lack hieroglyphic inscriptions; this feature, along with the drawings' perceived ugliness, has contributed to their diminished scholarly appreciation. Some drawings appear disorganized, seeming to 'wander' across walls without an organized composition or a focal point. However, when closely examined, many scenes do include a ground line and also depict figures in hierarchical scale, a stylistic and iconographic feature that is significant for this discussion of the Ruler and Protector theme in Room 9. The nature of graffiti as a genre, which includes their sketchiness and 'disorder', may indicate how their creators used it – as a rapidly drawn commentary on witnessed events.⁴ The Ruler and Protector theme is a familiar visual trope celebrating rulership

found in official sculpture programmes at Tikal; when re-imagined in the graffiti, it appears greatly altered, skewed and perverse. As an alternative to official imagery and live ritual, these graffiti preserve an historic voice and show an extraordinary artistic agency that can be interpreted as both a form of archiving events and, perhaps akin to a Maya version of the Greek chorus, acting as both spectator and commentator.

Ruler and Protector theme

The visual trope of Ruler and Protector appears to be a regional motif, most commonly seen at Tikal, although select versions have been identified at other sites in the Petén region of modern Guatemala (Clancy 2009; Lindley 2012; Zalka 2014). At Tikal, the trope appears in private spaces: carved wooden lintels from the superstructure shrines of Temples 1 and 4 and in graffiti within select elite residences, and, most importantly for this study, Room 9 in Maler's Palace. It is worth noting that at Tikal the composition and general form of the trope remains the same whether it is scratched on stucco walls or carved into a wooden lintel: it consists of an oversized standing figure and a smaller seated figure. The large protector figure appears like an animate shield standing behind the ruler figure and he can be depicted either as a man or an anthropomorphized individual. Scholars have identified this figure variously as a patron deity, war god or companion spirit (Clancy 2009; Harrison 1999; Lindley 2012; Martin and Grube 2008; Sharer and Traxler 2006; Taube 1992). At Tikal, the seated figure is associated with the Late Classic rulers Jasaw Chan K'awiil (682–734 AD) and his son, Yik'in Chan K'awiil (734–746 AD) because both these kings were depicted in the Ruler and Protector lintel programmes from Temples 1 and 4 respectively (Martin and Grube 2008). They are usually adorned with some kind of headdress or elaborate regalia. Other elements seen in the trope are the elevated platform, litter, palanquin or temporary architecture as well as a ceremonial staff gripped by the seated figure. The standardized nature of the Ruler and Protector theme is compelling, giving it a universal quality that may have enhanced its meaning.

Lintel 3 is inside the superstructure of the shrine of Temple 1, spanning doorway three. Carved into the extremely hard surface of several boards of sapodilla wood is a complex scene of pageantry (see Fig. 7.2). Although surrounded by hieroglyphic inscriptions, the focal point of the lintel is the depiction of the seated ruler and standing protector. The complex headdress, jewellery and the jaguar skin draped over the bench signify Jasaw Chan K'awiil's status as ruler, separating him from the commoners and other elites, while the protector is depicted as a fearsome jaguar, who stands like a man with paws outstretched like arms. This suggests that it was galvanizing the union of the king's earthly person with supernatural.⁵ Thus, the imagery and context of the Ruler and Protector theme found on Lintel 3 suggest this

trope galvanized the union of the king's earthy person with the supernatural and because it was found in the ceiling of the superstructure of his burial temple it is also an instrument of ancestor worship.

Form and meaning

As discussed above, the focus of this analysis will be the formal characteristics of the Ruler and Protector graffiti depicted on the east end of Room 9 in Maler's Palace. Through a visual analysis of these graffiti it will become clear that there are some significant differences between the imagery of the Lintel 3 depiction and the incised scenes from Room 9. The composition remains the same but changes in the depiction of the ruler and protector serve to alter the original meaning of the sacred visual trope. The north and east graffiti clusters are the most extensive depictions of the Room 9 version and will be the focus of this examination. The imagery on the south wall contains two additional representations of the visual trope, but this programme is less clear.

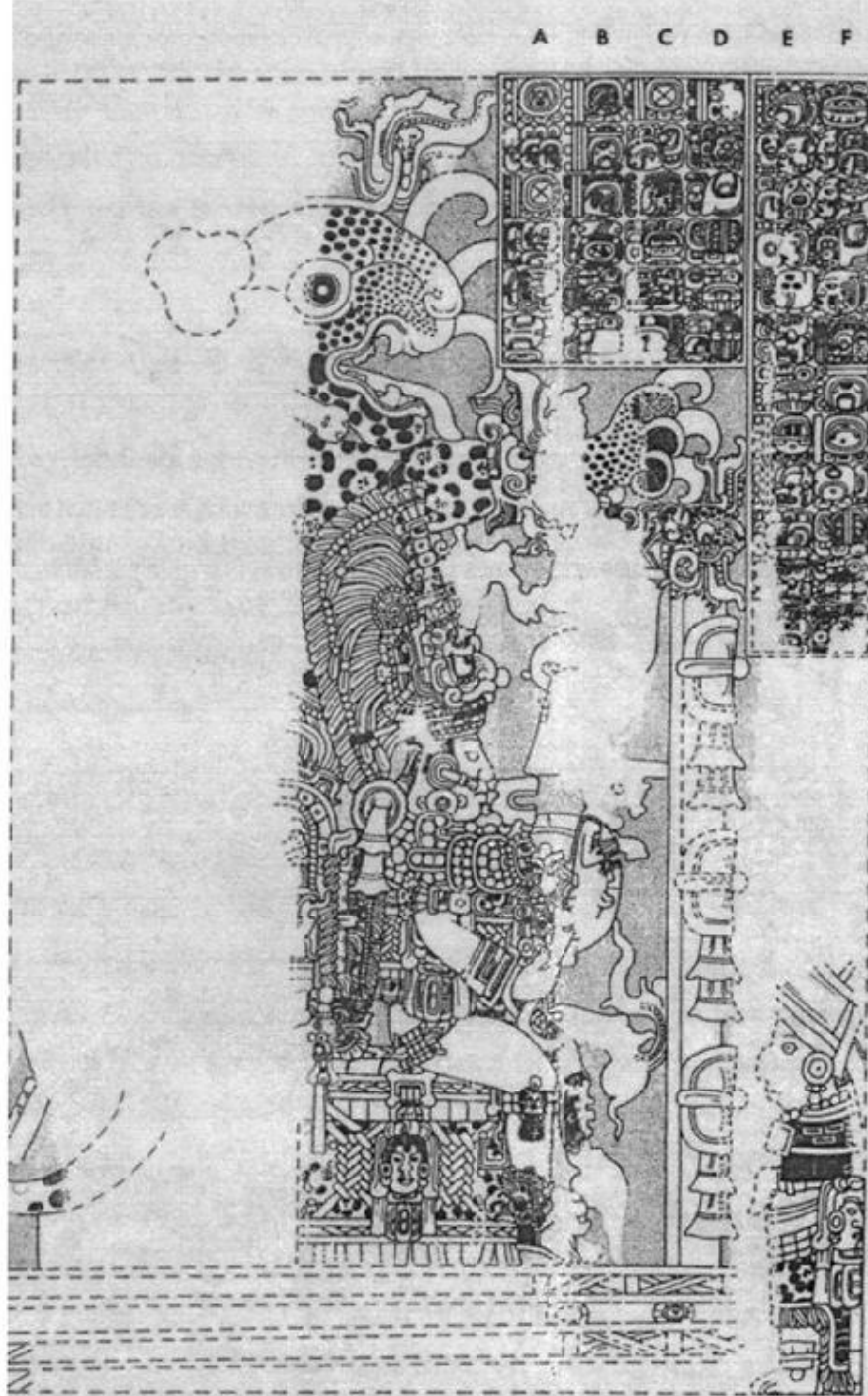


Fig. 7.2 Lintel 3, Doorway 3, Superstructure Shrine, Temple I (5D-1), Tikal, Petén, Guatemala. c. CE 750. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

The bench located in a niche on the east side of the Room 9 created a private space for repose and was also the location of a cluster of subversive graffiti. The first image, on the north wall, is perhaps the most complete representation of the Ruler and Protector theme (see Fig. 7.3). It includes an elevated palanquin, or temporary structure, with a railing. The seated ruler and looming protector are depicted in a style reminiscent of political cartoons, with the ruler appearing one-dimensional, more like a decorative element adorning the legs of the protector than a serene leader. The protector is depicted as a cuddly feline; he is spotted, his eyes are large, his mouth is open and he has long whiskers. In contrast, the ruler appears as a 'little man', he is shown without any distinguishing physical features or costume detail, save the depiction of cranial deformation and the small X decorating the bench where he sits. The small figure of the seated ruler is tucked under the large body of the standing feline, as if he is in some way vulnerable; even his stance and visual focus appears to be guided by the protector's posture and gaze.

The east wall graffiti are arranged in a circular cluster tucked away above the masonry bench and appear almost like wallpaper (see Fig. 7.4). Viewed as a large narrative, these three images might depict an event witnessed by the graphitist. The image located clockwise from the left shows a litter being moved by four tiny figures standing below and to the rear of the structure. The protector is anthropomorphized; he appears unambiguously human, with the physiognomy of a robust Maya elite male. He has a prominent nose, protruding chin, an open mouth and a pronounced belly. His adornments are those of an elite male with double-curl headpiece, ear flares and belt. The ruler is again depicted as doll-like and much smaller than his companion; he is seated on the bench marked with an X. He wears a huge spiked feather headdress, which is not only the focal point but also emphasizes the childlike body of the ruler. The proportional dissimilarity between the two figures is visually striking. The ruler and his protector are posed similarly: their arms are outstretched and rest on railings; their two gazes are focused left.

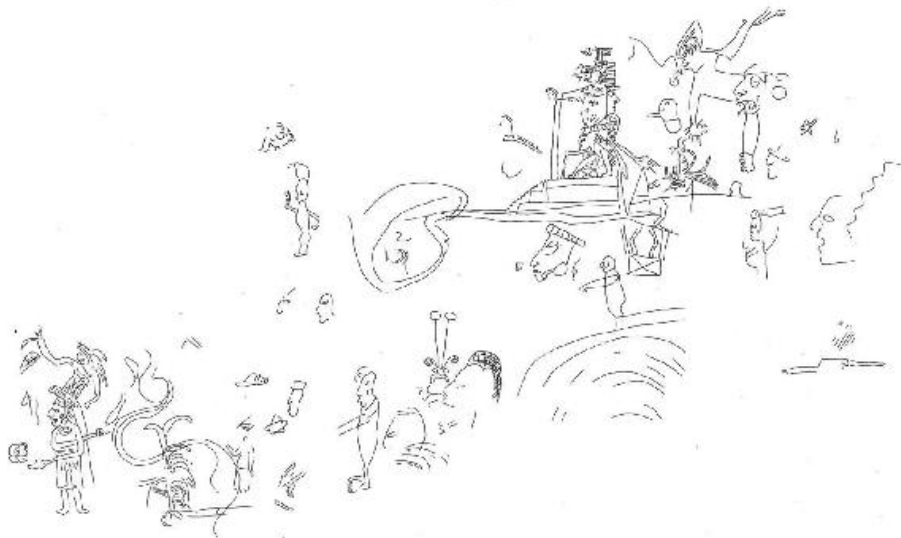


Fig. 7.3 Section of north wall graffiti, Room 9, Maler's Palace (Structure 5D-65) with Ruler and Protector theme, Tikal, Petén, Guatemala c. mid-eighth century. Reproduced from Trik and Kampen (1983: fig. 71). Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

In the middle composition, the protector is also shown with a double-curl headpiece and large protruding ears, a snout, whiskers, an open mouth and a tail-like motif at his rear. There are no spots or ear flares. His arm is extended, grasping the support/railing, which is cross-hatched as in the earlier depiction. He could almost be read as a man wearing the costume of a feline protector. The ruler is barely recognizable. In this incomplete image are the remnants of a royal bench, whose shape is devoid of the X design. Although this image lacks detail, the composition and the exaggerated scale between ruler and protector is consistent with the other graffiti.

Although this last scene is sketchier, the protector figure is unambiguously human; he continues to stand, facing left, and his arm rests on an unmarked vertical support. The bench is marked with the X design but it is unoccupied. A small figure, also facing left, is shown to the left of the empty bench, standing or in the act of stepping off the litter. The presence of what may be the ruler's small figure is confusing. His unoccupied bench, a portable throne made of woven palm fronds, were signifiers of the ruler – features highlighting the ambiguous messages of the image. The visual uncertainty signalled by the empty bench and the diminutive transitional ruler appear in stark contrast with the protector, who is drawn with a strong line and organized in a clear composition.

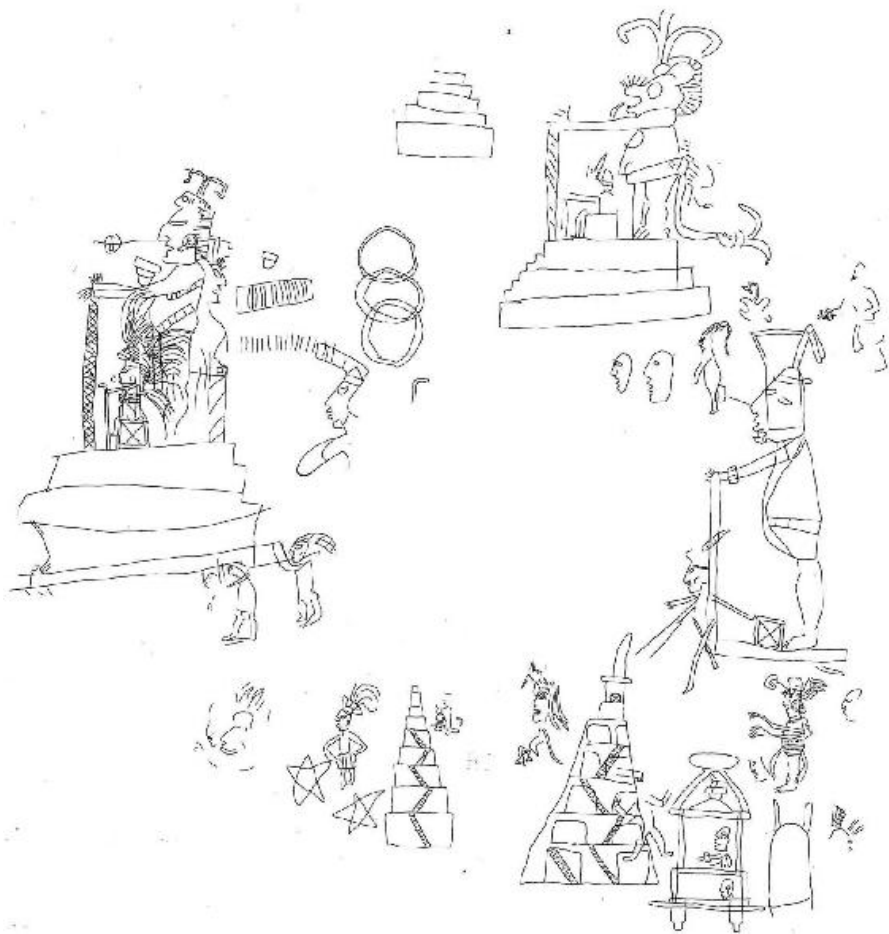


Fig. 7.4 Section of the east wall graffiti, Room 9, Maler's Palace (Structure 5D-65), a cluster of three Ruler and Protector themes, Tikal, Petén, Guatemala, c. mid-eighth century. Reproduced from Trik and Kampen (1983: fig. 72). Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

In these three scenes the protector is not only the focal point but his body dominates the whole image. In the first and third scenes, the protector figure is human; in the second, he is feline. While each protector has been individualized to a degree, his body and proportions remain consistent, in contrast, to the three diminutive figures of the rulers. In the scene on the left, he wears an out-sized spiked headdress, in the middle scene he is only partly visible, and in the final scene he is shown exiting the platform. In all three graffiti, the protector is clearly the dominant figure.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis: the subjects of these scenes depict the Ruler and Protector visual trope either within a ceremonial landscape (north wall) or in a circular cluster (east wall). When the graffiti are compared to imagery from Lintel 3, the subjects are the same, but the proportions of the figures are quite different. On the carved lintels,

ruler and protector are depicted in a naturalistic scale and one that allies with the Maya visual canon. In the graffiti, the ruler is depicted as a man lacking in regal stature, whereas the looming protector figure becomes an increasingly perplexing, even visually jarring, image. Furthermore, we could consider the Ruler and Protector visual trope as a type of canonical visual contract, and imagery that alters or reinterprets this trope carried with it significant messages.

Classic Maya satire

The Ruler and Protector visual trope appears in other graffiti from Tikal, found in comparable elite residences (e.g. Building 96 in the Central Acropolis and in the Bat Palace complex).⁶ The imagery from the north and east walls of Room 9, contrast with these depictions in the attention to detail and clarity of design, but the most apparent difference is the context and organization of the clusters.⁷ Depictions of the theme at Tikal in Temple 96 and the Bat Palace are isolated representations.⁸ The number and consistency of visual evidence in Room 9 reflects an unusual interest in the theme of the Ruler and Protector; however what is depicted in the graffiti is a departure from the canonical representations. The visual trope seen carved into the lintels from Temples 1 and 4 are interpreted here as a visual document or charter to rule. As such, it may have operated outside simple propaganda and was more like a seal of rulership, rather than a narrative of greatness. In contrast the graffiti from Room 9 depict a childlike, weak or non-existent ruler whose person and station are eclipsed by a supernatural being.

The function of the Ruler and Protector trope was altered when it was scratched onto the walls of a social space like Maler's Palace. The graffiti in Room 9 incorporated the same subjects and composition, but transformed the meaning by changing the scale, movements and expressions of the figures. The sheer number of these scenes and their repetition in clusters would have had meaning for a seventh- and eighth-century visitor. Each vignette varies slightly but, as will be discussed below, the visual emphasis is placed on the protector figure rather than on the ruler, an unusual trait and one that does not adhere to the Classic period canon. The Ruler and Protector theme in the graffiti from Room 9 staged a subversive message created by elites for their own pleasure.

The graphitists who designed the carved lintels from Temple 1 and 4 and those who created the graffiti of the Ruler and Protector theme in Room 9 chose to use figurative imagery as a primary source for communication. The lintels do have hieroglyphic text, but the imagery appears to dominate the plane. The human body, its proportions, scale and gestures became their focus. Like many societies, the Maya used a hierarchical scale to denote important or powerful individuals (Miller and O'Neil 2014; Schele and Miller

1985; Schele and Mathews 1998). By examining, in detail, the graffiti from the north and east walls of Room 9, visual patterns come into focus, such as the diminutive of the ruler figure when compared to the protector. One could argue that hierarchical body scale was also employed in this imagery; however, in this example it may have been used to diminish the person of the king or satirize his divine right to rule. Depicted as a toddler or miniaturized man while his protector was shown with giant-like proportions was to invert a canonical image and change its meaning from glorification to subversion.

Lindley identified the Ruler and Protector theme as a type of 'Charter to Rule' or a form of visual ideology (2012: 42) that, when displayed, worked to distinguish the king from other elites. A contemporary example could be the presence of the Great Seal of the United States, which is used both to authenticate federal documents and to distinguish the President from other politicians. When these potent symbols are intentionally altered or subverted, their messages change. The graffiti from the east end of Room 9 are an example of this type of transformation; by re-imagining the visual language of the Ruler and Protector trope and exaggerating differences of scale and proportion, the graffiti could become a form of satire. Caricature is an under-researched sub-category of Maya imagery found either in the secluded spaces of caves, depicted on hand-held objects,⁹ painted polychrome vessels and illustrated manuscripts.¹⁰ State-sponsored inscriptions and sculpture tend to unequivocally glorify the ruler and his dynasty while contemporary graffiti, specifically those from Maler's Palace, exhibit a flagrant indifference to ancient Maya codes of representation. Our understanding of sixth and seventh century Tikal politics largely comes from archaeological records, deciphering inscriptions and official or canonical imagery; in contrast, graffiti depict a parallel history inspired by witnessed events and humour, suggesting the presence of varied and dissenting voices.

This examination of ancient Maya graffiti and the Ruler and Protector theme complicates our understanding of the nature of Classic period Maya visual culture and how it functioned. Graffiti, in Maler's Palace, illustrate the presence of various worldviews among the Maya of Tikal. This subversive imagery is unexpected in an elite residence and these images, discretely incised on the east end of Room 9, may be examples of a horizontal propaganda (Lindley 2012; Marcus 1992). The presence of subversive graffiti inside an elite sanctuary provides a new depiction of elite lived experience, suggesting an effort by the graphitist to effect change through satirical imagery. These markings were meaningful visual programmes that may have evoked a parallel, or even divergent, interpretation of official texts and events.

Visitors' Inscriptions in the Memphite Pyramid Complexes of Ancient Egypt (c. 1543–1292 BC)¹

Hana Navratilova

When appearing in a monumental environment, ancient Egyptian graffiti interact with wall decoration and hieroglyphic texts which constitute an essential part of Egyptian art and architecture. Like rock inscriptions – a category of textual and figural evidence closely related to graffiti in ancient Egypt – they create meaningful places (Förster and Riemer 2013: 42). Graffiti in a built environment ‘augment’ the man-made space with another layer of cultural value, another layer of meaning (Darnell 2014: 74–8). This chapter follows visitors in the royal necropolis of the ancient capital of Memphis through the graffiti they left on monuments. We will meet different groups of graffiti makers, map the graffiti, see what they say, how this changes over time and how easy or difficult it might have been to actually write a graffito. Consequently, we will see how reconstructing the writers’ intellectual and bodily engagement with their monumental surroundings opens up layers of meaning, and displays processes of place-making as well as the self-fashioning of individuals and communities through the commemoration of past figures and their relationships to local sacred spaces.

Memphite graffiti makers: staff, visitors and others

In the necropolis of the ancient capital of Memphis, Egypt, graffiti are ubiquitous. The area was used for generations as a burial place for royal and non-royal Egyptians and as a cult place for local deities. Consequently, generations of graffiti are witness to local history, from the marks of the masons that took part in the construction works of the tombs, to less obliging traces left by modern tourists. In the pyramid complex of king Sahure in Abusir, built c. 2428–2416 BC, relief decoration includes the drawing of a kangaroo added by an Australian member of the Allied troops in the 1940s, who projected his identity into the ancient space. In the same temple, one also finds graffiti in the form of cursive texts added around 1500 BC, which concern the professional status and knowledge of their ancient

writers. Such a time span of graffiti production is already enough to suggest that not all of the uses of this space were systemic, i.e. part of one cultural and social system and respecting the intention of the builder.² Graffiti clearly witness, but also contribute to, redesigning the existing space. In the Memphite area, it is possible to distinguish between different kinds of writers and different kinds of graffiti.

A major category of graffiti comes from the members of staff who were in charge of the funerary cult sites, and who were often directly affiliated to the cult sites or to a supervising institution. Priests or other participants in the funerary cult of non-royal individuals of the Old Kingdom (c. 2600–2100 BC) left traces of their presence in the Saqqara mastabas,³ as did the Late Period and Ptolemaic (from eighth to first century BC) personnel of the cult of the god Apis in the Serapeum centuries later (PM III2: 789, 796).

Staff graffiti are not specific to Memphis; they existed throughout Egyptian history, like the masons' marks, including priests⁴ and other personnel,⁵ their superiors or inspectors,⁶ as well as desert travellers – perhaps prospectors or desert guides (Diego Espinel 2014). The well-known Theban Mountain and Valley of the Kings graffiti collection (a recent outline by Rzepka 2014; in detail, see Černý, Sadek et al. 1970; also further Barwik 2015; Dorn 2011) may, in many instances, be included under staff graffiti, because they were produced by the royal necropolis builders.

The graffiti considered here are those left by so-called visitors, although the dividing line between generations of local staff and later visitors may perhaps be a thin one.⁷ The term 'visitors' graffiti' is generally applied in Egyptology to graffiti left by people in funerary monuments which they visited.⁸ As opposed to staff, visitors were usually not directly employed in the institution they visited (temples or funerary complexes were institutions with a professional as well as an economic remit) although they might have had another link to it (e. g. that of expert interest or local knowledge).

These graffiti span the duration of the New Kingdom (c. 1539–1077 BC) with a concentration during the 18th dynasty (c. 1539–1292 BC).⁹ Attested throughout Egypt, they appear in larger numbers in the elite cemeteries of Memphis (Navratilova 2015b, with further references), Thebes (Ragazzoli 2013, with further references), Assiut (Verhoeven 2012) and Beni Hasan (Hassan 2016). They can be a way to re-appropriate and re-interpret (Navratilova 2015b: 267–77; Ragazzoli 2013), in short, re-define (Ragazzoli forthcoming), the space of a funerary monument, or cult chapel. New Kingdom visitors' graffiti throughout Egypt have both shared and site-specific characteristics.

The graffiti found in the Memphite locations deliver messages with a wide scope, concerning writers and locations, as well as audiences. Significantly, the surfaces that conveyed the graffiti were part of monuments, which contained earlier information about religion and kingship. In the vast and heterogeneous epigraphic ensemble, Memphite graffiti often demonstrate

the relationship between graffiti makers and the monument being visited. Most often, graffiti identify both the sacred nature and historical significance of the building. In particular, it seems likely that these secondary inscriptions on monuments could have answered an articulation of the self-fashioning of Egyptian elites who negotiated their relationship to the kingship and deities, namely aspects of:

1.
Historical awareness – ‘the temple (or pyramid) of king XY’ was identified in a number of graffiti. Plus, graffiti could register an important event in their writers’ life – ‘(My) king was in Syria...’.
2.
Literate culture including religious concerns – deities of Western Memphis could be approached, including, but not limited to, deified past kings.
3.
Contemporary understanding of the space within which they were produced – notably as a sacred space.

In addition to their location and content, the materiality of graffiti is a central matter. Their medium and the writing surface as well as more widely detailed contextual conditions of existence must be taken into consideration (Piquette and Whitehouse 2013) because they reveal a purposeful activity with an overall duration (in the Memphite region) from the reign of Ahmose (c. 1539–1515 BC) until (probably) the late nineteenth or possibly early twentieth dynasty (c. 1200 BC), i.e. more than 300 years. To that end, the following must be examined:

1.
Method and style of writing.
2.
Tools and pigments employed to write.
3.
Orientation of the inscriptions in relation to prior extant decoration and architectural elements.
4.
Distribution of graffiti within the building, whose diverse parts represented specific cultural practices.
5.
Location of the building – from its impression in the landscape to local connectivity (in relation to roads and tracks).

Where Memphite graffiti are written

In the region of ancient Memphis and between the modern archaeological sites of Giza and Meidum, where the royal pyramids of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties III to VI, c. 2592 to 2120 BC) were built, there are four major monuments with visitors' graffiti and several graffiti hot spots adjacent to them. These include the pyramid complex of king Sahure in Abusir (with a nearby hot spot in the mastaba of Ptahshepses – a tomb of an important dignitary of the fifth dynasty), the Step pyramid complex of king Djoser in Northern Saqqara (plus smaller graffiti groups identified also in Southern Saqqara), the pyramid complex of king Sneferu in Meidum and the pyramid complex of king Senwosret III in Dahshur from the Middle Kingdom (c. 1800 to 1760 BC). From an Egyptological perspective, one cannot fail to note that all Memphite edifices adorned with graffiti are remarkable feats of Egyptian architecture. We suspect this fact had not escaped the visitors either, as they did not scatter the graffiti at random in the necropolis, but chose their location carefully.

Firstly, visitors' graffiti are often located in areas of importance, which were used for cult as well as for burial and memorial practices of different local communities. Thebes and Memphis, as well as Assiut, share these characteristics. The sacred landscape of Thebes was connected to the cult of the gods Amun and Hathor (Marciniak 1968, 1971; Ragazzoli 2017), while the landscape of Memphis related to the god Sokar and that of Assiut to Wepwawet (Verhoeven 2012). Inhabitants of local communities worked and were buried here, took part in local festivities, venerated local gods on a regular basis and paid homage during important religious feasts.¹⁰

Secondly, Memphis features the site-specific characteristic of being the location of the royal burial complexes. Therefore, the attention paid to them may be also time-specific. Funerary and memorial edifices of the kings were an important part of the concept of contemporary royal legitimation in the New Kingdom – the time of the extant graffiti. In many instances, several generations were visiting the same set of buildings.

Memphite graffiti were usually located near the probable route of ancient roads leading to the monuments of major pyramid complexes (Navratilova forthcoming). Yet, the ideological and architectural importance of the buildings, ultimately royal commemorative monuments, might have influenced the choice of their location (Navratilova 2010, 2015a-b; Ragazzoli 2013; Verhoeven 2012), as will be explained further.

Within the edifice, visitors appear to have circulated among the major aspects of a pyramid complex; the pyramid, a causeway, a valley temple and a complex of further cultic buildings adjacent to the pyramid. Such an opportunist perambulation of accessible rooms is one further possible explanation for the location of the graffiti. More probably, however, the visitors were interested in specific wall scenes or decorative schemes, or architectural elements including room arrangements, and purposefully sought them out.

Compare the temples of Netjerikhet Djoser, where the focus was on Djoser's pyramid and funerary temple complex, Sahure, with the image of Sakhmet of Sahure (Hoenes 1976: 113–15, also Volokhine 1998) or Senwosret III, with its decorated causeway and chapels depicting scenes of divine birth and compositions of royal titles (Navratilova 2013: 120–41).

Table 8.1 Memphite graffiti distribution

Site	Monuments	Graffiti
Giza	Dynasty 4	Dynasty 19/20
Abusir	Dynasty 5	Dynasty 18, 19
Saqqara	Dynasty 3, 13	Dynasty 18, 19, 20 (?), 26
Dahshur	Dynasty 3, 12	Dynasty 18, 19
Meidum	Dynasty 3	Dynasty 18, 19

Placement of graffiti both high above the original ground level or, on the contrary, low-down upon a wall, indicates the actual physical presence of people (Dorn 2014; Sadek 1990: 109–20). The graffiti located low-down upon the walls suggests that the visitors perhaps even kept some rooms purposefully free from sand and debris that might otherwise have accumulated there.

A hypothetical sequence of a visit to individual parts of a pyramid complex may be assembled as follows: graffiti often adorn original entrance areas (e.g. the causeway of Senwosret III at Dahshur, the entrance colonnade of the Step pyramid complex at Saqqara, a vestibule in the Ptahshepses mastaba at Abusir), suggesting that this area might have been visited first. Some visitors perhaps did not carry on any further, perhaps they were satisfied by what they saw, or perhaps they had no further interest in the edifice. A preference for doorway and entrance areas could be further explained by their significance as liminal spaces.

Other visitors then continued into major cultic zones – for instance chapels or offering chambers, especially in the precincts of Djoser and Senwosret III and, to a lesser extent, in Southern Saqqara by that of Pepi II. The visitors were clearly aware that they were in a chapel or temple area, and defined it as such in their texts. However it is unlikely that an active funerary cult would still have been carried out on a regular basis in these edifices (e.g. there is little evidence of a material culture) – unlike earlier examples in private tombs (Hamilton 2016).

The presence of graffiti next to important scenes or title sequences of kings and other members of the royal family, for example for Senwosret III at Dahshur, suggests that visitors took a specific route during their preambulations. The royal aspect might have added a specific dimension of state interest and prestige – the visitors entered a sacred space of the royal cult. They recognized the owner of the visited buildings as an historical person, i.e. a king with the appropriate titles and a name common to king-lists, and the primary purpose of those buildings as a stage for the funerary cult of a long-deceased king. To this effect, the graffiti feature the phrase,

hut-netjer ‘god’s chapel’, a phrase used to describe a king’s funerary chapel.

The visitors’ participation in the cult was, on occasion, enhanced by ‘the offering ... to the *ka* of the king XY’. This not only benefited the temple/pyramid precinct owner, but also integrated the visitor into a privileged royal cult. While this might have been a strong component of the Memphite graffiti practice in the 18th dynasty, as it developed throughout the New Kingdom it also had other aspects.

Motives for writing on the wall in the west of Memphis

The visitors to Memphis were a complex group. Despite many of them titling themselves uniformly as *shes*, conventionally translated as ‘scribe’, they might have been craftsmen or dignitaries possibly responsible for building projects during the 18th dynasty (Navratilova 2015b: 60–4), and local notables during the 19th dynasty (Davies 2013: 133). In any case, they self-identified as ‘scribes’, pointing to a shared social identity as cultured and literate men.

Establishing their motivations is more intricate, especially as the phraseology of graffiti between these two periods was subject to change. An average 18th dynasty visitor would write: *Coming made by the scribe NN to see the (funerary) temple of king XY. He (or I) found it beautiful like heaven, and the sun was rising in it. May there be an offering for the ka of the king XY...*

The 18th dynasty visitors were ‘scribes’ as well as stewards and priests; particular titles and affiliation are often difficult to establish. In any case, they demonstrated their literacy by writing and, on occasion, also reading (by reacting to earlier graffiti). Their pertinent historical knowledge was highly valued in the elite context, particularly in the 18th dynasty (Bickel 2013; Popko 2006).

But why were they also keen to see scenes and titles relevant for the concept of kingship, as in Dahshur? In this perspective, the Dahshur examples are intriguing as their dates suggest that visitors from the reign(s) of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III could have accessed the monument at a time preceding or coinciding with major building and legitimating projects of their own kings. Hatshepsut in particular used past inspiration in her texts and a similar approach can be detected with Thutmose III (Navratilova forthcoming. Compare Bickel 2013; Cwiek 2014; Galán, Bryan and Dorman 2014). It may therefore be suggested that some of the visitors were either local or court-affiliated professionals who were searching for particular models or more general inspiration. The practice of copying was probably not limited to the royal monuments, because scenes and texts of specific importance and interest were probably sought out in non-royal tombs as well (Den Doncker 2012: 23–34; also Laboury 2013: 11–28), but the royal aspect was especially important due to contemporary interest in the concept of royal memorial complexes (e.g. Ullmann 2002). If the visitors

were artists, visiting an ancient funerary temple complex could have been at once a contemporary version of the 'consultation of working documents' and a 'reference to old texts for prestige' (Eyre 2013: 289, 315).

In contrast with the previous dynasty, the 19th dynasty visitors to Saqqara were more enclosed in their own devotional interest and approached local gods,¹¹ among whom the past kings might, but need not, have been included. Major deities were addressed, starting with Osiris, to the benefit of the visitor, in the form of the *ex-voto* formula of this period: *Do good, do good, Osiris, to the scribe NN...*

They, occasionally, also titled themselves as 'scribes', with their affiliation, thus confirming their professional status. They expressed themselves in a space previously sacred to a deceased king. Even though graffiti had always been used to express devotional appeal throughout the New Kingdom, this alteration of content in the 19th dynasty (Navratilova 2006) emphasised personal piety, which explored divine relations with a new intensity (Frood 2007: 15–17, with further references).

Some of the 19th dynasty callers possibly visited the Memphite necropolis with the same interest as Deir el-Bahri (Marciniak 1974; Ullmann 2007: 8) and the wider West Theban necropolis. Here, graffiti making allowed them to approach the divinity, to benefit from its closeness, as well as to commemorate the visitors' knowledge and values in an appropriate setting (Ragazzoli 2011; 2013). Local Memphite feasts or travel to local shrines, such as to Sakhmet of Sahure (e.g. Hoenes 1976; for the restoration by Seti I, see Brand 2000: 53–4), are among the reasons for a desert trip that provided an occasion for graffiti writing. This was also the case for their Theban counterparts (e.g. the Festival of the Valley, when the main god of the city, Amun, left his temple to cross the Nile and visit the necropolis).

Throughout the New Kingdom, the graffiti share demonstrations of literacy, professional competence and interest – even of professional competition. Critical remarks or even purposeful damage to other people's texts are found, as are satirical and humorous comments (Navratilova 2015b: 156–60; Verhoeven 2009). The writers reacted to each other's texts, sometimes by written criticism, at other times by destroying the name and title of a previous writer (see Fig. 8.1).

The above interaction also invites an enquiry into graffiti as a material and performative practice. Graffiti are an epigraphic performance, executed by actors aware of their audience. The examples above have shown that a divine or deified royal audience was important, but so was the earthly readership of contemporary and subsequent graffiti makers and visitors. If graffiti mattered enough to be removed or criticised, they mattered enough to be seen and to represent their writer. Within the sacred space of a funerary temple, they created a new meaningful place – of piety, of course, but also of historical awareness, indeed of historical communication between the past kings and past, present and future visitors. Only a qualified

literate person who had mastered the skill of writing on the wall could write a graffito.

Memphite graffiti as a material practice

Most visitors' graffiti were written with pen and ink and could technically be called *dipinti*, which usually refers to sketched or painted inscriptions upon walls. The script of scribes in Memphis was hieratic and the use of hieroglyphs was limited. This is meaningful in terms of self-presentation as hieratic – a cursive script preferred in handwriting – was used in literature, administration, accounts as well as letters, whereas hieroglyphic was a writing system reserved for monuments. Thus, visitors and scribes used their own, everyday, writing embedded in a monumental context. The ink they used to write the graffiti outwardly resembles that used on manuscripts, or alternatively perhaps the black pigment used for painting.¹² Either 'draughtsmen' or 'scribes' could have authored the graffiti, both having access to such pigments and to writing/painting/drawing utensils. However, a well-mastered hieratic script would point toward writers trained in a more typical administrative and literati environment, as would the pen used for most graffiti – a rush brush used on other more typical writing media, such as ostraca and papyri. The hieratic signs are often of the same size (1–2 centimetres in height), and style of writing is often close to literary texts or neat letters and professional texts (e.g. medical papyri) of the period.

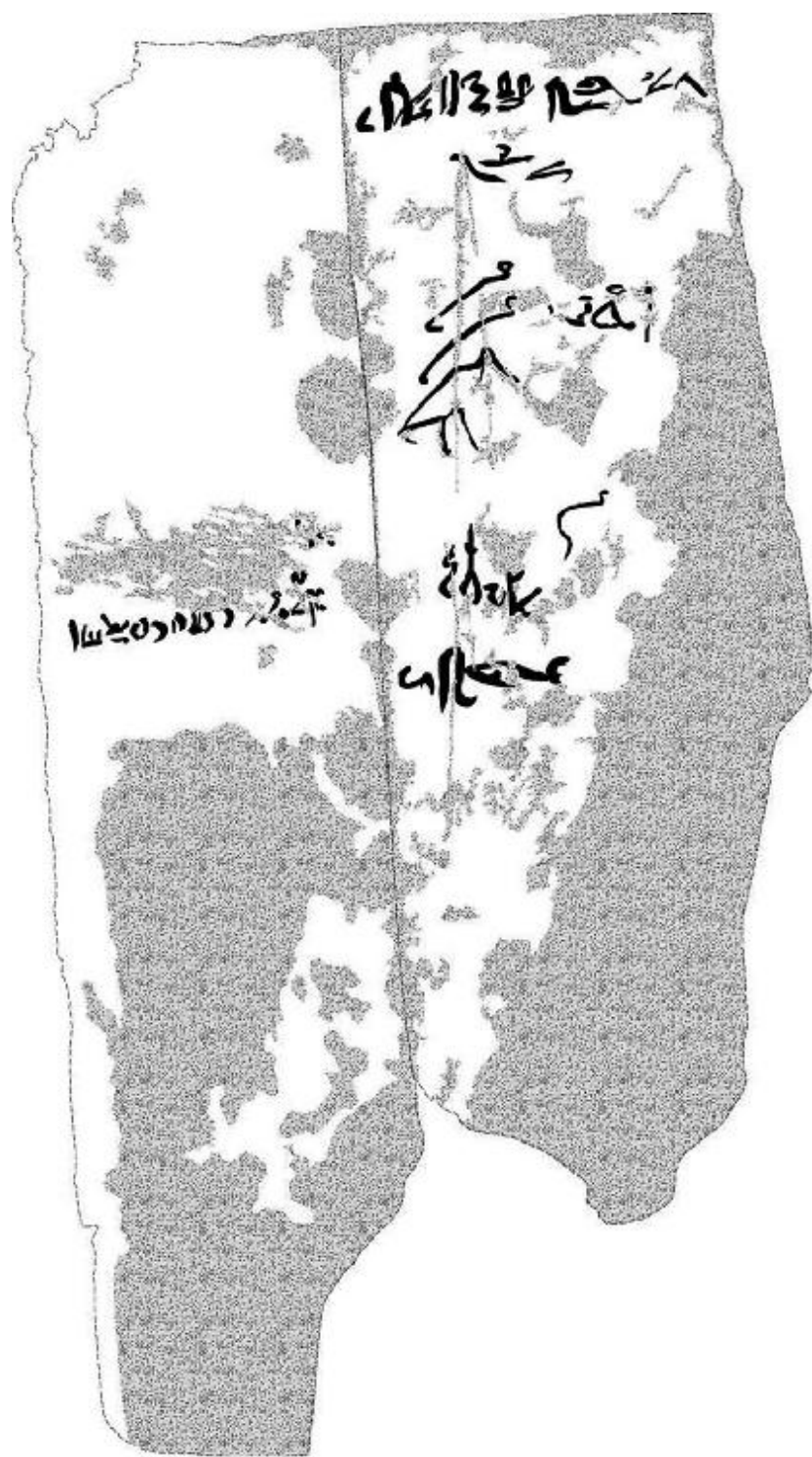


Fig. 8.1 A section of a doorframe (fragment no. R 29c) with graffiti from the pyramid temple of Senwosret III at Dahshur – an opening line of a graffito on the left was

But the surface they had to tackle to write their graffiti was very different from these manuscripts and showed how they adapted and prepared for this specific medium. Often, it was a decorated – and therefore relatively smooth – surface that was either covered in polychrome relief or painted. In other instances, the surface was abraded, weathered or had lost its original colours, while keeping most of its structure. Finally, in some instances, the surface was plain stone. The ink, transferred from the writer's rush brush, interacted differently with these varied surfaces.

An untreated rough stone surface appears in the temple of the pyramid at Meidum. The temple is an elegant building, but its internal walls were apparently left not only without decoration, but also without the preparatory work which would imply that such internal decoration was intended. Writers used both smaller and larger hieratic signs to write their graffiti, often with considerable style and confidence, although the rough surface somewhat hampered their aplomb, as the progress of rush brush/pen was hindered by the craggy stone.

However inconvenient it might have been to write on rugged surfaces, smooth, paint-coated decorated walls represented a rather tricky medium in their own right, as shown on the painted dados (the lower parts of the walls) and the doorframes of the pyramid complex of Senwosret III at Dahshur. The painted wall was even, pale and seemingly ideal for writing. Consequently, it was often chosen for graffiti. It seems, however, that the brushstrokes had to be firm and the brush full of ink to leave a lasting mark. There are, interestingly, no obvious drip marks, droplets or other traces that would indicate too much ink being applied. On the contrary, some brush strokes had faded/blistered off very easily, suggestive of a pattern of the brush drying out and leaving a fainter, vulnerable mark on the surface. On some paint coatings, the ink appears to have remained very much on the surface. In others, a partial, if limited, absorption might well have helped to preserve the pigment. Certainly, the proficiency of the writer no doubt influenced the result. The results may be seen more broadly either as part of the professional training and skills of the individual, or as a result of specific training for graffiti writing. In the former instance, draughtsmen would have been prepared to operate (on draughtsmen's literacy see Janssen 2005 and contributions in Dorn and Hofmann 2006) on a vertical surface made of stone or stucco, or to deal with different earlier coatings, whereas for the 'scribes' – be it administrative personnel, literati (Ragazzoli 2013) or more generally, literate visitors of non-artistic background – this would have been a new writing arrangement. The poses adopted by scribes suggest that an inclined writing surface was more frequent than fully vertical (Vandier 1964: 193–216).

Furthermore, papyrus and ostraca were relatively absorbent surfaces. Neither of these conditions was available for graffiti writing, scribes had to work on a surface resembling, but not identical to, ostraca, which was probably a novelty for many of them.

It is therefore likely that the visitors might have tested their pens before embarking on a full graffito – as attested by the individual signs ('trial' signs) appearing in Meidum and Dahshur. Additional Theban evidence on ostraca suggested that the scribe was trained to write the graffiti formulae.¹³ On Memphite evidence alone, the writers seem to have considered and planned at least some of the graffiti rather carefully. In addition, planning and training might have included another skill, observed in some Abusir, Saqqara and Dahshur graffiti – appropriate frequency in dipping their pen (Megally 1981: 218–40; Navratilova 2015b: 243–4). More frequent dipping enhanced chances of visibility – and survival (Ragazzoli forthcoming). Writing on the wall so that the result was a neat visible and hopefully lasting text apparently required some preparations that did not belong to the skill set of every literate Egyptian. An intellectual grasp of the temple space and a demonstration of cultural identity within it had to be accompanied with specific bodily engagement with the space and its materiality.

Conclusions

For the graffiti makers of the Egyptian New Kingdom, the ancient monuments were still a sacred space, but characteristics of that space were changing and allowing for rules of behaviour that would not have been necessarily accepted in similar spaces of a contemporary temple (Frood 2013). Yet, both tomb and temple graffiti shared a role in making, defining and redefining a professional space (Frood 2013; Ragazzoli forthcoming).

Intellectually, the funerary temple or pyramid was re-appropriated with the help of graffiti, without ceasing to possess some of its original meaning. The graffito was in part a shorthand declaration of literacy, professional competence and competition. Yet it also recognized the value of a visited space in terms of piety and cultural memory.

The materiality of Memphite graffiti furthermore suggests targeted, purposeful operations within the edifices, as well as the no less purposeful applied training of writing skills. These efforts would indicate that writing graffiti was not an activity carried out on the spur of the moment, but a practice beyond an incidental accompaniment to wider interests in significant buildings that were part of cultural memory.

Carving Lines and Shaping Monuments: Mortuary Graffiti and Jews in the Ancient Mediterranean

Karen Stern

Inside catacombs hewn beneath the city of Rome, sometime in the late second to fourth centuries AD, a mourner grasped a sharp object and carefully carved a menorah symbol into the drying cement closure of a tomb. Around the same time, a visitor scratched the message: 'good luck on your resurrection!' into a doorway of a necropolis in Roman Palestine (Fig. 9.1; Schwabe and Lifschitz 1974, 180, no. 194). At first glance, these carvings appear to have little in common – one is pictographic, the other is textual, and each emerged on opposite sides of the Mediterranean. But closer examination reveals several similarities between these markings and the acts that produced them. First, each exemplifies a form of writing (whether pictorial or textual), whose contents and placement differ markedly from the commissioned decoration and epitaphs that adorned spaces nearby. Second, and perhaps more surprisingly, each carving, in different ways, decorates mortuary structures used by ancient Jews. The first adorns a tomb inside one of the largest catacombs in ancient Rome, situated beneath Mussolini's famed Villa Torlonia, while the second marks the entry to a large burial cave in Beit Shearim, the most significant necropolis of its period and region (Fasola 1976, 27; Avigad and Mazar 1993: 236–7). One last shared feature of these writings, however, relates to the amount of attention they have traditionally garnered among art historians and philologists: little to none. An excavator of one of these sites, for instance, once claimed that '... some of the[se] drawings and graffiti ... lack any pre-planned order and are carelessly executed ...' (Mazar 1973: 136). Such pronouncements have deterred specialists from considering these types of markings; scholars of ancient Jewish, Roman or Byzantine history, in turn, dutifully ignore them.

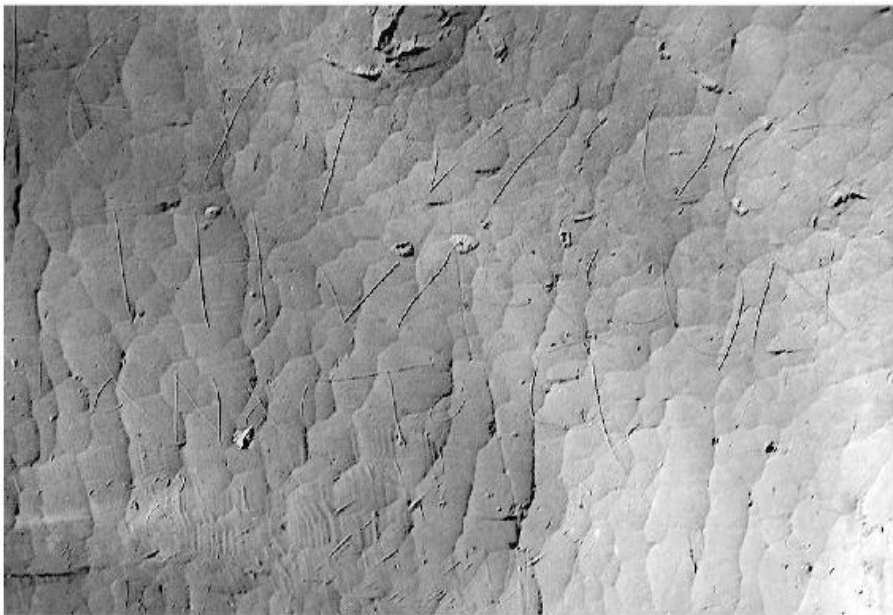


Fig. 9.1 Textual graffiti from Catacomb 20 in the Beit Shearim necropolis, Israel. Photo: Ezra Gabbay. Reproduced with permission of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

Here, I suggest that acts of carving pictures and texts into the walls and doorways of ancient necropolises, such as those described above, are not incidental, random or careless, but rather, deliberate and potent; they constituted acts of commemoration, architectural modification and spatial appropriation, deliberately enacted by Jews in the late ancient Mediterranean. While graffiti of the modern world are often viewed as graphic detritus, which memorialize otherwise ephemeral thoughts, identities and brash activities of their creators, this chapter, much like others in this volume, advocates for opposite understandings: acts of carving graffiti into ancient cemeteries served as significant and deliberate means for Jewish inscribers (among others) to remember and communicate about the dead and to personalize and modify the monuments that surrounded them.

Graffiti and Jews in the ancient Mediterranean

Graffiti associated with ancient Jewish populations are more numerous than one might imagine. Hundreds of pictorial and textual markings of Jewish association are found in ranging practical, spatial and geographic contexts from periods of Hellenistic through Byzantine rule: around synagogues, pagan sanctuaries and open cliffs, and inside burial caves, public theatres and markets, throughout regions of modern Egypt and Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Italy and Malta as

well as North Africa. As I suggest elsewhere, these graffiti require scrutiny for reasons beyond their sheer numbers and their conventional neglect, because they offer unparalleled information about the daily lives and activities of ancient Jews in their broader cultural environments (Stern 2012: 174–5). Teachings of the ancient rabbis (predominantly preserved through the literary corpora of the Mishnah and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds), as well as the architecture, art and inscriptions from synagogues and Jewish burial complexes, serve at present as the cornerstones of ancient Jewish historiography. Reading certain graffiti through the lenses of cultural, anthropological, spatial and landscape theories (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1980; Gell 1998; Tilley 2008), however, contributes insights that surpass those possible in traditional sources, by revealing otherwise undocumented activities once conducted by Jews throughout the ancient Mediterranean.¹

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate select features of this broader argument about graffiti and ancient Jewish populations, by considering some pictorial and textual graffiti from the largest known mortuary complex used by Jewish populations in the ancient Levant – the necropolis of Beit Shearim. While the conclusions drawn from these examples are necessarily more limited, they demonstrate how attention directed to the contents and placement of graffiti can yield significant results – not only for understanding features of ancient Jewish history but also, ultimately, for reassessing the cultural dynamics and behaviours of Jews and other numerical minority populations throughout the ancient world.

Definitions and method

Only the most elastic of definitions for the category of graffiti can facilitate its classification of markings associated with ancient Jews in the Roman Levant and elsewhere. My definition of graffiti responds to multiple factors including the medium, authorship, chronology and spatial dimensions of associated writings and drawings. I use the word ‘graffiti’, first and foremost, in its most literal sense (from the Greek ‘*grapho*’), indicating modes of writing or decoration that are done by hand – whether on walls, in tombs, on vessels, etc. Often these markings reflect secondary use and modification of surrounding spaces, as I discuss below, while authorship also plays a role. In many cases (but certainly not in all), graffiti (as opposed to monumental inscriptions) were directly carved without the necessary assistance of specialists. Designation of markings as graffiti also responds to chronological factors: graffiti were necessarily applied to spaces *after* their initial construction and result from the ongoing and diachronic uses of surrounding environments. Distinctions of graffiti from other types of inscriptions and decorations, moreover, necessarily relate to their spatial features. In mortuary caves, such as those specifically considered here,

graffiti include markings which are applied in common areas, such as cave vestibules, hallways and doorways and, as such, do not constitute epitaphs or elements of monumental decoration associated with individual tombs. Moreover, the inclusion of pictures, as well as texts, in this category draws attention to both the potential interplay of images and texts, and encourages consideration of how people manipulated their built environments *in toto*. Identical inscriptions and pictures have been, can and should be classified in distinct ways elsewhere, but consideration of these markings as graffiti offers new insights into ancient Jewish behaviours and responses to their built and natural (otherwise unworked) environments.

One might question, from the outset, how one could determine whether an ancient graffito – or any artefact for that matter – has any connection with ancient Jewish populations (Kraemer 1991: 141–62). In general, the graffiti I associate with Jewish populations exhibit at least one diagnostic feature, and, in some cases (as is preferable), two or three. Some textual graffiti may include personal or second names of biblical or Jewish origin or association (including Moses, Judah, Jeremiah, Annanias, etc.; Ilan 2012; Williams 2005: 21–40; 2007: 307–27), while others explicitly include identifying terms (such as *Ioudaios*, *Iudaeus*, or *[H]ebraios*) either in Greek, Aramaic or Latin. These, according to particular variables, are conventionally translated into English as either ‘Judean’ or ‘Jew’ (Cohen 1998: 69–106; Kraemer 1989: 35–53; Noy 1993: ix–x; Stern 2008: 307–36). Graffiti in Hebrew or Hebrew Aramaic scripts (as well as those found in Greek and Latin) are generally distinctive of ancient Jewish writing practice; still other examples incorporate iconography most conventional in Jewish contexts, such as images that evoke the architecture and appurtenances of the destroyed Jerusalem temple (d. 70 *ce*), including the menorah (seven-branched candelabrum), or shofar (ritual horn) (e.g. Fig. 9.2). Many graffiti include no such diagnostic markers, but were discovered in spatial contexts particularly associated with Jews, including mortuary complexes, in which the majority of burials are marked with Jewish names, symbols or vocabulary (Kraemer 1991: 141–62).

Variability in the sentiments, symbols and placements of graffiti in cemeteries and other structures visited by ancient Jewish populations suggest significant cultural diversities among inscribers. Regardless of the contents or placement of graffiti, then, it ultimately remains impossible to determine whether the author of a specific graffito might have identified herself as a Jew. Even if the inscribers of certain graffiti considered themselves to be Jewish, moreover, one cannot assume that all Jewish graffiti inscribers and artists retained equivalent cosmologies, practiced similar forms of devotion, possessed unified theologies or sustained comparable relationships to their Jewish and non-Jewish neighbours (Elsner 2003: 114–23). This indeterminacy remains acceptable, however, because the goal of this type of study is to interpret variable *patterns* in ancient practice

in places frequented by Jews, rather than to determine the precise social historical profile of individual graffiti inscribers.



Fig. 9.2 Graffito of a menorah (seven-branched candelabrum) from Catacomb 12 in the Beit Shearim necropolis, Israel. Photo: Ezra Gabbay. Reproduced with permission of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

Instead of focusing exclusively on the lexical contents of graffiti, this approach draws from diverse insights of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Alfred Gell (1998), Michel de Certeau (1980) and Henri Lefebvre (1991), among others, to consider graffiti writing as a *practice*, which entails and reproduces sets of socially, culturally and spatially circumscribed activities (echoing and transforming Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*). These practices, in turn, engaged surrounding landscapes in identifiable ways (see Tilley 2008). Texts and pictures found inside burial caves, when regarded from these perspectives, can be viewed distinctly: as vestiges of sets of behaviours conducted by ancient artists which responded as much to surrounding physical landscapes as to common, if unspoken, conventions of regional mortuary practice. To disproportionately emphasize the lexical contents or iconography of these graffiti (as *products*), to the exclusion of the ranges of activities that produced them would therefore be to overlook some of their most important uses for cultural enquiry (see Gell 1998: 8). Graffiti writing, after all, served as a means for writers to engage, modify and 'classify' the built and natural spaces that surrounded them; this fact offers a window into ancient Jewish behaviours and facilitates our identification of how ancient actors enunciated their presences in (and appropriation of) ancient spaces (Bishop 2006: 16–17, n. 14; de Certeau 1980: 98; Lefebvre 1991: 33).

Mortuary graffiti, according to these perspectives, index the activities and interactions of their authors inside and with monuments constructed for the deposition and commemoration of the dead.

Case studies from Beit Shearim

While graffiti appear in mortuary complexes throughout the Levant, many concentrated examples were discovered inside a large subterranean cemetery, famous among scholars of ancient Jewish history – the necropolis of *Besara*, or *Beit Shearim* (Avigad and Mazar 1993). Situated around the modern city of Tivon, about 20 kilometres from the city of Haifa in southwestern Galilee of modern Israel, use of the cemetery spanned the late second to sixth centuries AD from periods of Roman through Byzantine hegemony (Weiss 2010). The necropolis originally encompassed hundreds, if not thousands, of graves, and may have once served as a pilgrimage site in its own right in antiquity given the local burials of famous rabbis (Avigad and Mazar 1993). Nearly thirty-three burial caves from the site were explored in the 1940s and 1950s (Avigad 1976; Mazar 1973). Some caves are quite small and originally contained spaces for five or six burials, while the largest known cave encased more than 100 sarcophagi and tombs. The excavated portion of the cemetery seems to have been used nearly entirely, if not exclusively, by local and regional Jewish populations, but the majority of the necropolis remains unexcavated and its associated demography (and size) remains speculative (Lapin 2011; Rajak 2001: 179–99).

Catacomb 20, which commands one of the grandest façades at Beit Shearim, has drawn the most attention of the surrounding caves. Three doorways punctuate the soaring arches of the catacomb entrance (Fig. 9.3) and back chambers of the cave soar to varying heights. More than 125 carved and painted monumental stone sarcophagi were discovered throughout its interior rooms.² The impressive size of the catacomb and the relative richness of the finds within it have ensured that its architecture, sarcophagi and monumental inscriptions remain among the best studied in the necropolis.



Fig. 9.3 Façade of Catacomb 20 in the Beit Shearim necropolis, Israel, with author's modification to indicate locations of graffiti inside the cave. Photo: Ezra Gabbay. Reproduced with permission of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

Graffiti carved into the walls and doorways of the same catacomb have drawn lesser scholarly attention than its other features. Most of these writings and drawings are carved around its northern entrance, and therefore receive little attention today from tourists – only the central door for the cave is opened for ingress, and those around the northern doorway remain lost in the darkness (interior placement indicated by arrow in Fig. 9.3). In antiquity, however, when the stone door to the northern entry was in use, light would have flooded the corresponding portion of the entryway, highlighting the contours of associated writings and drawings.

At first glance, the texts and designs around this northern doorway appear to be a chaotic assemblage, with little to predict their contents or placement. Some markings include Greek phrases scratched into the walls and ceiling. One text, for instance, is carved directly facing the catacomb entrance at eye-height (c. 1 metre above the ground) to read: 'take courage, holy parents/fathers, no one is immortal' (Avigad 1976: 95, fig. 41). The declared audience of this message includes *pateres* (fathers, parents or ancestors), who are designated as *osioi* (holy or pious), but its mention of mortality suggests that it specifically addresses the holy or pious *dead*, who were carried into the space. The wording of this message, in any case, implies that the act of reminding the dead of the universality of death (by declaring that 'no one is immortal!') should comfort the newly deceased. The efficacy of the text appears to rely on an expectation that, to comprehend the message, some aspect of the 'holy parents' might remain sufficiently sentient (let alone, literate!) after their deaths.

Additional writings, including one described above, are scrawled over the edge of the ceiling onto the northern wall of the passage to the upper left of this graffito. One explicitly addresses all of the dead (in the plural verbal form), by wishing them: 'good luck on your resurrection!' (Avigad 1976: 95, fig. 42; Fig. 9.1, above). The palaeography of this text is distinctive and thus suggests independent authorship from the previous message. By wishing favourable luck to *all* the dead during their resurrection, this text may reflect a different belief that those eligible for resurrection might include all the dead carried inside, not just the pious or holy ones. Notions of resurrection percolate throughout contemporaneous rabbinic literatures; perhaps the inscriber of this graffito believed that the dead would rise from their tombs, as some rabbinic texts suggest (Lieberman 1965: 495–532; Nickelsburg 2006; Park 2000: 16–45; 122–73). Still, it is unclear what sort of resurrection the inscriber of this graffito might have imagined.

But markings, such as those above, do not appear in isolation. Tens of pictures and shapes also surround the northeast entrance to Catacomb 20. Human figures recur 1 metre inside the doorway. These have box- or net-like bodies, with abstract facial features crowned with heads of hair standing on end (Fig. 9.4). Other shapes appear, including grid-like boxes, nets and rectangles. Hatched obelisks and striated domes are also carved in multiples.³ While it remains much harder to affix dates to some of these images, which may have been applied during secondary or tertiary uses of the cemetery, they are sufficiently common in contemporaneous mortuary contexts, as I discuss below, to suggest their ancient application. Just like their neighbouring texts, these markings are found several metres away from the closest sarcophagus or burial niche; but, unlike those texts, these figures betray few obvious connections with their surrounding mortuary context.



Fig. 9.4 Graffiti of human figures and obelisks, Catacomb 20, Beit Shearim. Photo: Ezra Gabbay. Reproduced with permission of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

Yet considerations of the interplay between the contents and locations of these markings and their comparisons with other local and regional examples, suggest that these carvings are not as random as they might initially appear. Sentiments embedded in the textual graffiti, for example, are with precedent: they are echoed in comparable writings in regional burial contexts. Epitaphs from Beit Shearim, and from cemeteries farther north in Tyre and elsewhere, include phrases identical to those in the graffiti of Catacomb 20 ('take courage, no one is immortal'), and include other messages that address the dead (Avigad 1976: 26, pl. V, 4). Graffiti from tombs found nearby in Jerusalem, the Judean Shefelah (Judean lowlands) and Abila (modern Jordan), also include anonymous texts which address tomb visitors and, perhaps, the dead themselves. These appear most frequently around entrances to burial caves or just inside their vestibules (Naveh 1963; Tsferis 1982; Mare et al. 1982: 62; Zissu 2001).

The precise pictures drawn around the entrance to Catacomb 20 are also attested in comparable spatial contexts throughout the region. Human figures are commonly carved in vestibules and the interiors of Levantine tombs – in other caves at Beit Shearim, as well as inside tombs in Jerusalem, the Judean Shefelah and throughout Hellenistic and Roman Alexandria (Kloner 1994; Tsferis 1982; Venit 2002: 74). Such images are difficult to interpret, but some have speculated that they may represent the appearances of visitors or of the deceased buried nearby (Naveh 1963: fig. 12;

Tsaferis 1982). Additional carvings, commonly found in regional burial caves, include those which resemble domes or obelisks. These may replicate profiles of three-dimensional structures commonly associated with the commemoration of the dead, such as funerary stelae, obelisks and other vertical grave markers. Such built monuments often represent the souls of the dead or mark places where the dead are deposited throughout the Levant and neighbouring Egypt (Mouton 1997); drawn figures may evoke similar understandings (Rachmani 1994: 31–2, cf. 64, figs 11, 13, 14, 15, 16; nos. 231, 473, 599, 601; Stern 2016: 252).

Synthetic attention to the lexical contents and distribution of some of the textual and pictographic graffiti within Catacomb 20, and their comparison with other regional examples, reveals several consistent features. Firstly, they are carved around the entrance to a burial cave and were quite visible in their original state – they are large, clearly incised, appear at eye-level and would have been illuminated when the neighbouring door was opened. Secondly, they are anonymous: the absence of explicit information about their authors, or about the deceased to whom the texts or images might be dedicated, distinguishes them from analogous epitaphs or types of funerary art which respond to the burials of the individual dead. Finally, many of these writings and pictures appear to be context-dependent – their lexical or semantic contents (whether texts or images) respond directly to the mortuary context of their surroundings. Closer evaluation thus suggests that these varied graffiti were applied with due deliberation.

Assessment

Excavators once dismissed the markings found inside the Beit Shearim necropolis as being randomly applied, incidental and careless. Closer examination reveals, however, that these graffiti do not comprise an accidental assemblage of textual and decorative scribbles, but rather, that they reflect systematic and context-sensitive acts of carving. Careful observation, paired with theoretical approaches to ancient texts and art, has facilitated this interpretation.

Graffiti from Catacomb 20, for instance, could have been written in a clandestine way in the depths of the burial cave, but visitors boldly and proudly inscribed these graffiti, beside one another, in order to be easily viewable. They are prominently located, of sufficient size, and were selectively illuminated whenever the cave door was opened. This visibility was likely important to inscribers, because anticipated audiences of these graffiti (as the lexical contents of the textual graffiti make explicit) included the living as much as the incoming dead.

Jewish inscribers, moreover, showed no compunction about acting like their neighbours when commemorating the deceased (e.g. Kloner 1994; Venit 2002; Zissu 2001). While no ancient literary texts document

contemporaneous practices of carving commemorative graffiti in burial caves, extant graffiti document how ancient Jews, much like their neighbours, used graffiti to transform and modify the spaces surrounding their dead. These similarities in mortuary practice, in turn, offer new insights into the cultural continuities among multiple populations in the ancient Levant, including Jews.

Graffiti drawn throughout the necropolis of Beit Shearim, as well as elsewhere in the Levant and Rome, moreover, do not embody, as Zadorojnyi (2011: 110) describes it, 'a trajectory of dissent', or 'illicitness'. They, rather, exhibit locally and regionally determined, socially sanctioned and constructive activities of spatial engagement (see Bourdieu 1977; Gell 1998).⁴ By writing throughout catacombs, Jewish individuals and groups staked claims to surfaces of burial architecture – perhaps as vantages to comfort or greet the dead; perhaps to respond to, reinforce or classify the mortuary nature of the space (see Lefebvre 1991: 36); perhaps to beautify or improve it; and/or perhaps to make marks to enunciate their own positions inside the landscapes associated with the dead (see de Certeau 1980: 97–9). Several of these possibilities might have existed concurrently.

Such acts of non-monumental writing and decoration, in all cases, are socially, culturally and spatially determined and embody, to modify a phrase of de Certeau (1980), a type of 'activation': by carving symbols and messages into doorways and walls of catacombs, visitors adopted active roles in reshaping the surfaces of their mortuary monuments and environments (Bishop 2006: 178–9). These participatory acts of modification, in turn, reflected, reinforced and created additional relationships between writers and their surroundings – with pre-existing architecture and decoration, with subsequent viewers and graffiti-writers and with the dead themselves. Textual and figural graffiti, according to these perspectives, serve as rare material vestiges of ranges of ancient commemorative behaviours and relationships, which can be mapped in place, space, landscape and time.

Section Three

Graffiti and the Written Page

Introduction: Graffiti and the Written Page

C. Ragazzoli

Their relationship to space lies at the core of graffiti. Among the examples discussed in the first two sections of this book, the spaces where graffiti have been left include a cave in the vicinity of royal temples of Ancient Egypt, an Anatolian rock presiding over natural features significant to the local Bronze and Iron Age populations, the cityscape near the site of the Gezi Park protests in contemporary Istanbul, and Old Jewish tombs in Israel. In all of these, the space colonized and delineated by graffiti is thus of a physical, topographical nature. We now turn to an entirely different environment, that of textual space, be it on the written page or – in this digital age – the computer screen.

In this final section, the distinction between wall, page and screen is blurred and questioned. Graffiti that might otherwise have been doomed to whitewashing or natural erosion survive on paper, and marginal inscriptions, once made digital, become the centre of attention. Though ephemeral by nature, paper becomes the route to permanence and canonization. Market-oriented digital companies encourage marginal inscriptions as things to be converted into new texts and sets of data that can be sold and promoted. Including such inscriptions could perhaps be seen as an unreasonable expansion of the scope of this volume. However, the following three chapters explore revealing paths and bring to light crucial aspects of graffiti and their relation to the writing practices of their time.

Graffiti are like traditional epigraphy in the sense that, in both, writing is an act of display. However, while formal epigraphy is often commissioned by an official power to broadcast its decisions, secondary epigraphy is often more personal and is used as such by individuals to publicize their thoughts and identity. In contrast, the pages of a book, whether printed or handwritten, appear as a space for privacy, a possible ‘room of one’s own’ to quote Rogers borrowing from Woolf’s famous essay. Yet books can be objects of circulation. Unlike walls that may be regularly whitewashed, books can be passed down through the generations, offering modern scholars the opportunity to comment on marginalia written by a medieval hand. Even today, books may host a social space and be keenly circulated. Medieval manuscripts were produced singly and passed on from copyist to copyist, illustrator, illuminator and binder. Their scarcity rendered them precious

objects, to be shared, lent and collectively read. Even in our era of mass-produced books, when it is cheaper for a publisher to destroy stocks of a paperback edition and reprint it on demand rather than to store too many unsold copies, writing's physical support can be erased and secondary writing reorganized into a primary corpus of information.

Graffiti, marginalia and annotations are all forms of communication. In ancient societies, epigraphy was often used for official communication while graffiti provided unofficial testimonies. In pragmatic terms, we can ask what kind of audience graffiti were intended to address in contrast to messages on the page or official inscriptions. Graffiti and marginalia institute dialogue: dialogue between a passer-by and his environment, between a reader and the established text. But graffiti are injunctive and ask for an answer, a reaction and eventually more graffiti; they create a dialogue with their audience, whether primary or secondary.

This dialogue leads to the appropriation and rearrangement of the space and the text. Two of the following chapters evoke the medieval art of *compilatio* and *ordinatio*, the traditional technique, inspired by Aristotle, that consisted of collecting and compiling elements of knowledge (*compilatio*) in an ordered and rational manner (*ordinatio*). As graffiti produce space and are a way for an individual and a community to appropriate places, marginalia augment, discuss and argue with the main text and are a way to claim possession of the book.

As previously mentioned, in the case of graffiti, space can be a limitation. Walls crumble and are whitewashed. Graffiti are inherently restricted by their context and may only be visible to a few passers by and for a short span of time. While it may at first seem paradoxical, in spite of the physical robustness of its supporting medium, wall writing is an ephemeral form of writing, and paper offers a surer way of achieving posterity. Ancient Chinese wall graffiti are known to us only because readers of the time transcribed them into notebooks. This is not an instance specific to China. It brings to mind the anthology credited to the tenth-century Iraqi traveller Abu el Faraj al-Isfahani, who made a compilation not only of graffiti that he came across on monuments, but also in books and even through hearsay (Crone and Moreh 1999). These borderline cases also draw our attention to the fact that in manuscript and epigraphic cultures the medium of the wall is part of the written and literary culture, on equal terms with the medium of paper. Together they are forms of communication deriving from the literary and textual archive of their time. The Chinese bureaucrats who left verse-lines on the wall of some hostels in provincial China thus negotiated their place in a shared historical and literary landscape. From being an informal communication to a local audience, once copied onto paper they become an open communication.

This movement from wall to paper and from paper to computer screen is a movement towards open diffusion. Several authors in this book make a

comparison between historical graffiti and modern social media. Facebook, tweeting and re-tweeting online comments are also about publication and transmission. When an ephemeral, informal set of verse-lines circulates in a greater system thanks to its being committed to paper and included in anthologies, there is an obvious analogy with light and personal statements circulating online and sometimes going viral – and becoming un-erasable – on media such as Facebook.

In chapter 10, Glen Dudbridge reflects on how poetry was rooted in movement and graffiti in medieval China. He starts by reviewing traditional epigraphy in ancient China, where the authorities used whitewashed walls to display, publish and publicize government proclamations. This may have opened the way to graffiti and, as Dudbridge notes, ‘from this it was one step to move from official to unofficial communication’. Graffiti in the form of verses mainly belonged to an elite culture. They were also deeply linked to circulation and travel, whether by provincial bureaucrats on missions or by runaways escaping war; they recorded journeys and paths, both individual and collective. Although such wall writing had its rules and its audience, it was not an institutional practice and it gave way to personal expression. It is only once they had made their way onto paper that such graffiti gravitated towards transmission and official culture. The key moment in this transmission process was the copying of graffiti into notebooks that ‘transcribe and document verses found on walls’. Such copies may give us access to inscriptions long painted over and lost, but they launch a ‘transmission on paper’ that ‘opens the way to literary canonisation’. Whether on paper or a computer screen, such transmission abolishes physical space and its limitation. A primary address to an audience of fellow travellers becomes an open communication to a virtual readership.

There follows an exploration by Janine Rogers of graffiti in textual space, namely the margins of medieval manuscripts, in chapter 11. Marginal scribbles known as *marginalia* used this space to interpret, appropriate, discuss and even possibly refute the main text. Such relationships to the primary text cover the whole spectrum of possible interaction between graffiti and their space of inscription. Just as the study of wall graffiti provides an important contribution to the anthropology of space and places, the study of graffiti and *marginalia* in books is an important contribution to the anthropology of the book.

Finally, Marc Jahjah takes the comparison between wall writing and social media even further with a chapter devoted to annotation practices in reading software in chapter 12. He shows how virtual space eventually collapses space altogether as *marginalia*, annotations and comments can become textual matter that is exploited by marketing companies such as Amazon and Apple. Their reading platforms offer a discursive space emulating traditional text on paper, but this secondary writing can become a primary writing when collected and rearranged by algorithms to create

information and data to be promoted and sold. Such practices rely on an injunction to participate, the same 'and-me' phenomenon often observed in connection with traditional graffiti. Their collective nature also moves the annotation from a dialogue between a reader and a text to a symposium. When the page dissolves, the intimacy of the virtual page reaches the mediation of a wall. Graffiti are 'de-framed', the page is collapsed and the information can be selected and rearranged to produce a new text, sold as a better one, in a digital, market-orientated version of *compilatio* and *ordinatio*.

Verses on Walls in Medieval China

Glen Dudbridge

In China walls in buildings were plastered and whitewashed;¹ from early in imperial history they could be used to display government proclamations. The earliest recovered wall bearing regulations on rural activities through the months of the year shows a date equivalent to 9 June, AD 5. It stood in a settlement on Han China's line of communication to the far west (Gansu Provincial Research Institute for Cultural Relics and Archaeology 2000: 34–6, 41, pl. 6). So here, and by implication universally in the Chinese empire, was a means of putting the government's wishes inescapably before the eyes of anyone able to read them.

From this it was one step to move from official to unofficial communication. The best-known poems by the ninth-century poet Bai Juyi, they said, 'had all within the course of twenty years been written on the walls of palaces and ministries, Daoist and Buddhist precincts, postal stations and halts.' And he himself wrote that 'over the three to four thousand *li* from Chang'an to Jiangxi, in all the district schools, Buddhist monasteries, hostels, and boats on the move, time and again there is someone who has written up poems of mine' (Yuan Zhen ji: 51.555; Bai Juyi ji: 45.963. Discussed in Nugent 2010: 199 ff.).

Here is the story in a nutshell: appealing verses were disseminated by brushing on walls with an efficiency and on a scale that other pre-print written media could hardly rival. This reflected the actions of a mobile elite, who were perpetually travelling the roads and waterways of the empire, often covering vast distances, visiting monasteries and temples, and staying in a network of hostels provided by provincial government to facilitate the movement of official personnel. In times of peace, this mobility would reflect the steady rotation of official appointments in the provinces, and between the provinces and the capital. In times of war, people moved to flee danger, or because events had taken charge of their lives. All these circumstances could stimulate the writing of verse, as people found themselves far from home, in alien surroundings, cut off from family and friends or even in the hands of unwelcome invaders. The walls of their lodgings were already covered by eloquent verses written there by earlier visitors: there was a clear invitation to join the virtual symposium by writing up verses of their own. So this medium offered space to obscure

travellers as much as to household names, and was open to fresh compositions as much as to derived transcriptions.

Overwhelmingly Chinese poetry adopted compact and structured forms. It was both an individual and a collective product: it could be composed alone or in company. Often the composition could be shared in a structured way, when one poem would be echoed by others deliberately composed with the same title and same rhyming words. Consequently, this was a social activity, whether shared among people present on the same occasion or among later participants who echoed work by earlier hands. And at a higher level of generality the writing of verse was a mark of belonging to that literary and scholarly elite from which the officers of government bureaucracy were appointed. Their verse made constant reference to a shared historical and literary past, and could often reflect on the writer's relationship with the great world of public affairs and national events. It was a medium in which individual voices could address the world at large. And the feelings they articulated in this medium were shared with a community of fellow spirits linking past, present and future.

But Chinese travellers and revellers did not simply write verses on walls. They wrote about themselves doing this. They also made paper copies of verses written on walls by themselves or by others. They described in notebooks and memoirs the situations in which they had read, written or responded to the verses left on walls. They transcribed and commented upon other people's notebooks and memoirs dealing with verse inscriptions on walls. In short, they appropriated and incorporated the wall medium into their literary culture on equal terms with the paper medium. They were obviously aware that whitewashed mud walls were an ephemeral medium for literary work. They knew and commented frankly about the grim drama in which time steadily removed the eloquence of earlier years, as the walls received new whitewash or simply crumbled in decay. And they were well aware that paper offered a more sound basis for transmission, alongside the carved stone and cast bronze that were used to carry more solemn inscriptions (Harrist 2008 (for stone), Nugent 2010 (for paper)).

For us the result is quite a rich heritage of transmitted literature that began life on those long-vanished walls. We now find it in personal notebooks, collections of poetry criticism and collections of individual literary work. And for some years our contemporaries have been busy configuring this heritage as a distinct field of production in China's literary tradition.²

So this was a culture that reached far beyond random acts of scribbling on walls. Instead it was rich in echoes, reflections and ironies; it contemplated itself critically; it generated its own energies. And a final layer of detached irony comes out here, as we now set about analysing all this self-analysis.

In terms of literary history there is a larger dimension surrounding the whole phenomenon. China, like other civilizations based mainly on the

written word, has tended to study its literature in a manner I would describe as institutional. Just as the imperial state took permanent charge of the great narratives of China's past by commissioning and imposing its own standard histories, so it also took charge of literature by officially recognizing, and even creating, anthologies and collections of writings, many with officially sanctioned commentaries. Books were approved for inclusion in the collections of the state library and an accepted literary canon in official catalogues made by the state library was established. For earlier periods, we depend on those catalogues and their offshoots for all our knowledge on Chinese bibliography. And later bibliographies have followed the state pattern. So the habit of institutional thinking about literature became ingrained in the minds of the scholarly class over 2,000 years, and still rules in the modern period.

All that is antithetical to the free, spontaneous verse culture that blossomed and faded on the walls of buildings (as, equally, it did in the oral medium).³ The verses that grew organically from the experience and introspection of travellers at given moments in their lives, in response to stimuli at given times and places, in echo of other people's verses glimpsed on walls, were regularly whitewashed over and lost forever. It was only when those same verses were copied into tangible forms of transmission on paper that they might escape from the fluid and dynamic medium which produced them. Once on paper, they could gravitate towards the anthologies and collected works that would enshrine them in a literary canon. A large part of the contents of *Quan Tang shi* [Complete poetry of the Tang], an imperial-sponsored compilation (1705–6 AD), was dredged from those personal notebooks, works of poetry criticism and individual collections that had picked up morsels from walls and other sources. It has remained a canonical authority on Tang poetry ever since. Yet the poems contained in it, gathered under their authors' names, are removed from the original contexts that gave them meaning. They have become like objects in a glass case, ready for later readers and critics to contemplate in the abstract.

Seen from this point of view, the notebook entries that transcribe and document verses found on walls represent a sensitive moment at the heart of that transition process. They do bring a point of indirect contact with the inscribed walls; they do often set contexts in time and space; they do give readers a sense of depth in time. They offer the only window we have upon the culture of verses on walls. Yet, by launching a transmission on paper they have opened the way to literary canonization – to a world of recognized works, of greater and lesser masterpieces, where literary scholarship establishes texts and researches authors, where literary critics propose and debate canons of value, where educators build the works into school and university curricula and where students sit exams focused on prescribed texts.

In an age of textual databases and search engines, it has become very easy

to survey the field of verses on walls. That, I think, has stimulated literary scholars to assemble and recognize the corpus as a distinct branch of China's poetic heritage. They have classified it in various ways – some in terms of gender, some in relation to the walled structures themselves, in one case even drawing a challenging parallel with the Internet in our own time (Dudbridge 2016: 6, n. 1). It is unnecessary to replicate their work here. But they do offer a starting point for a new stage in our study of the transition from walls to paper. What happened to those unique, sometimes intimate, moments in the lives of individual travellers when their verses began to circulate in the great system? We shall explore a number of particular cases in an effort to uncover different stages in the progress towards the canonical world described above.

They will show that this was not a simple, linear progress. In fact it was governed by randomness: the chance that a particular individual might come to a particular place at a particular time; that he might pick this rather than another poem to copy into his notes; that he might choose to write up a particular poem in his eventual notebook; that the notebook itself might attract enough interest to survive in transmission; or that a particular item in it might be copied into other, more successfully transmitted works. Even selecting poems to study here has brought a certain randomness into play. Why are they chosen? They allow both male and female voices to speak – some known, some unknown, some famous. They communicate contrasting personal themes – private pain, patriotic anguish, the trauma of abduction, late-career introspection. At another level, they reveal the strong presence of context – spectacular views, moments of historical crisis, new visits to former scenes. And in each case they give an insight into the distinctive dynamics as they travel through two interfaces on their way from the private moment to the public arena: the movement from wall to paper, and the movement to open diffusion.

A dying woman

On a wall in a government hostel at Shanxi in Xin zhou prefecture,⁴ a woman wrote up several hundred words recounting how her family were originally members of the scholarly class, and her parents had married her to the son of a man called Lu (whose personal name is forgotten), a Steward within the Three Ranks.⁵ She had given birth only three days before, but Lu was so anxious to claim his month's salary that he forced her out onto the road, and now she was in Shanxi, and dying. Near to death, she wrote on this wall a formal complaint about the suffering to which she had been driven and anguish at being so far from her parents that she had nowhere to turn with her grievance. The words were most harrowing, and written with such literary flourish that all who read them were likely to have been moved by pity. Once dead, she was given a hasty burial at the foot of a hill behind the

hostel. Most people who pass that way feel strongly indignant on her behalf, and more than a hundred have written poems mourning her. Someone collected these under the title 'Poems about Lu the Slave', and there are some very fine lines among these. Lu was a servant in the household of Xia Wenzhuang. People denounced him as 'Lu the Slave' out of loathing for his greed and cruelty (Meng xi bi tan: 24.241).

In purely narrative terms this story speaks for itself. Historical context adds no larger significance to an essentially personal tragedy. The man Lu, identified as the son of a Steward within the Three Ranks and servant in the household of the statesman Xia Song (985–1051 AD) is not really material here. The reference to Xia by his posthumous name Wenzhuang dates the events to after his death. Such details are incidental.

But for students of graffiti, the narrative sets out some fundamentals. This gentle-born woman, desperate for sympathetic human contact in the last hours of her life, turns to the public space of a wall in a government hostel. For her, this is an established, respected channel of communication with a world of unknown readers. She writes her salient points there and expects them to be read. They are indeed read, and with such response that a secondary body of sympathetic verse builds up upon the same wall, at the place of her death and burial. All this creates an arena of primary communication. The collecting of more than a hundred of those poems into a volume with a title represents a new stage – the transition from wall to paper, with the potential to outlive the wall and its changing surface and to find a much wider readership. But the next stage is no less significant: the volume is now lost to transmission, with it the poems and even the original inscription. This blank in the sequence reminds us that the vast majority of words written on, and copied from, walls through the centuries surely met the same fate: they fell by the wayside. What does come down to us has narrowly survived the random chances of transmission. That we have any knowledge of this unnamed woman and her sad end is entirely due to the curiosity of the assiduous polymath Shen Kuo (1031–1095 AD), whose famous notebooks preserve so much knowledge of the Chinese world in his century.⁶ This third-party intervention is a moment of universal dissemination.

Rage at dynastic defeat

In the twelfth century AD the administrative prefecture Ying zhou lay just south of a mountain range that separated the greater part of Chinese lands from the deep south – the provinces Guangnan East and West. The celebrated notebook author Hong Mai (1123–1202 AD) came here in the year 1147 AD, accompanying his distinguished father Hong Hao (1088–1155 AD), who had just suffered demotion to this remote province (Jiyan yi lai xi nian yao lu: 156.2532). While the father would spend the rest of his life there, Hong Mai himself moved elsewhere to take on a career of his own. But this

place was the setting for the following narrative:

Thirty *li* north of Ying zhou there is a Golden Mountain Monastery. Once, on arriving at that place, I saw two single-stanza poems inscribed at the back of the dharma hall. A monk said that they were written there by Lady Zhao, wife of Yu Si, an imperial controller in Guangzhou. The verses were free in spirit and out of the ordinary, while the brushwork was on a scale of four inches for each character, as sturdy as [work by the calligrapher] Xue Ji [649–713], and extremely pleasing. Several years later, when I passed that way again, there were no monks at all, and the wall itself was in a state of ruin. But I can still recall the words and will record them here. One poem went:

Do not let a trained falcon be content with one mission.
Who among the generals has the will to quell the Xiongnu?
Countless events in recent years have made one lose all heart:
Only with gazing at mountains can eyes still flow with tears.

The second went:

Paying court for a living, amid turmoil and confusion,
Left no scope to climb high among the forests and streams.
But with success there yet came climbing shoes for a whole lifetime:
Controlling the south-east, with mountains on every side.
No doubt they were composed by [Yu] Si (Rong zhai sui bi: 13.165–6).

On one level this reads as a low-key record of lively verse and stylish calligraphy seen written on a wall during a journey. But the surrounding historical context was spectacular. In 1127 AD the Chinese dynasty known as Northern Song had been driven south by Jurchen armies invading from the north. In its new phase the Southern Song now faced the challenge of securing its own remaining territories and the hopeless task of recovering the north. The verses ascribed here to Yu Si overflow with the feelings of that time – rage against the northern tribesmen (here symbolized by China's ancient enemy, the Xiongnu), indignation at the failures of military leadership, impatience with the unfinished tasks, emotional release at the sight of noble mountains in the deep south.

If Yu Si really was the author of those lines we can develop a striking reading from his personal situation. Almost the only historical mention of this man records that on 3rd December 1133 AD he was dismissed from his position as Mounted Courier for the Guangnan West military command (Jiyan yi lai xi nian yao lu: 70.1178; Song shi quan wen: 18B.37b), who was responsible for maintaining liaison between the imperial court and military commanders at the south-west frontier, but in effect serving as the emperor's eyes and ears. This function was evidently resented, and Mounted Couriers were discontinued altogether after his dismissal. But the poems were clearly written by a man newly arriving in the south and fresh from crossing the mountain range, evidently with his wife Zhao, the stylish calligrapher, travelling with him. That must have taken place some few years before 1133 AD – in other words at the very period of the dynastic

catastrophe. Hence the patriotic vigour of the verses, and also the strong impact they made on Hong Mai, who seems to have memorized them at that first viewing. But for modern readers, the crucial movement from the wall to the paper medium took place at the later return visit, and it provides a perfect example of the transit of that interface: an observer, struck by writing on a wall, chooses to memorize then later record it, in a notebook destined for publication, wide dissemination and eventually classic status in Chinese literature.

A philosopher shares his self-doubt

Zhu Xi (1130–1200 AD) was the most influential Confucian thinker of the last two thousand years, yet he shared with posterity these intimate moments of self-doubt at two different points of his life:

Written at the end of Yuan Jizhong's edition of *Can tong qi* [The Bond of the Three]: 7 Years ago I was passing through Shunchang and stayed at Yundang hostel, where I saw written up on the wall the words:

The magnificent sacred fungus
Blooms thrice in one year.⁹
Why then should I alone
Have a purpose without fulfilling it?

I repeated these words several times over with mournful feelings. I do not know who wrote them there, but they matched my own thoughts exactly. On [20 September 1197] I passed this place once again, but the old inscription was completely gone. Reckoning up the years and months, forty more years had suddenly slipped by, and my own purpose really was unfulfilled! On my journey I happened to be reading this book, then also felt stirred by things from the past, so I playfully wrote there this single stanza:

Staid and stolid through a hundred years, but how much time do I have?
While the sacred fungus blooms thrice, what do I expect to achieve?
From the elixir of gold no tidings come, in these late years,
And I sigh once more at that verse on the wall at Yundang.

Hui an ji: 84.48ab

When he first stayed at the Yundang hostel, Zhu Xi was a young man at the start of both his official and his intellectual career, travelling through the hilly country of the south-eastern province of Fujian to seek instruction from the Confucian scholar Li Tong (1093–1163 AD). By the time of his second visit there four decades later, and with only three more years to live, he was taking refuge from savage attacks at court against both himself and his teachings.

The bleak little verse that confronted him on the hostel wall was actually a group of lines from the poem 'Secret wrath' by Ji Kang (223–262 AD), in

which that dissident Daoist-inspired poet and musician had railed against the storms that beset his life. When Zhu Xi himself wrote his own lines forty years later they, in turn, echoed those of another celebrated poet recluse, Tao Qian (365–427 AD), for whom the pleasures of alcohol gave more value to a fleeting life than the vain pursuit of public recognition.¹⁰

Such delicate tissues of allusion are familiar, even routine, in Chinese poetry. But the real electricity here comes from contingent experience. Zhu Xi had surely read, even memorized, those lines of Ji Kang long years before all this (they were in *Wen xuan*, [Selections of Refined Literature], the standard anthology of early prose and verse). But now they confronted him out of nowhere, in the wilderness, on a wall, at a particular moment in his life, and struck home so powerfully that he would still remember them forty years later.

The hostel wall stands at the centre of a dynamic inner drama. It was here that some unknown hand wrote up the quotation that would catch the eye of Zhu Xi and haunt his private thoughts through a lifetime. The same hostel wall would prompt Zhu Xi's own bitter stanza in later life. But the narrative that recorded and bound all these together into a moment of frustration in his life was jotted down first as a note at the end of a book he was reading on the journey – the Daoist text *Can tong qi*, exploring the medicinal and life-prolonging functions of chemical elixirs. And from there it duly found its way to survival in the collected writings of the Master.

Women caught in the Mongol invasion

On a large bridge named Clear River Bridge, standing about ten *li* from Zhang Town,¹¹ there are two song lyrics composed by 'Anonymous'¹² to the tunes 'Spring in the Qin Garden' and 'Fragrance Spreads through the Hall', which write about women met taking flight from the Troubles. At the end appear the words 'Sister with a Grudge' and 'Mother-in-law with a Grievance', extremely unsophisticated expressions. After them follow two more lyrics to the same tunes by one Yang of Luochuan. She describes herself as a Yang married to a Luo. In the year *bingzi* [1276], having disembarked at Fuweng Pavilion in the third month of spring, she fled through byways into the hills under pressure from pursuing cavalry, but in the end could not escape being chased down and seized. After walking for three days she passed this bridge, saw the two lyrics by Anonymous, and felt that [those women] had not known suffering like hers. So she wrote matching verses on the wall, and added, 'Those who read this – do not think that the writer is not a child of a good family, but be forgiving of these circumstances.' These lyrics, though unsophisticated, deal at the start with traitors in power betraying their country. Also this: 'Let me go straight home / I'm weary of idly plying the brush to and from / Let me be like a fresh young wife.' And this: 'Who was it that wrought this wrong?'. They all hark back to things in times gone by. So poignant. Whenever I call to mind how extreme things were in the relations between south and north, I always grieve. And with this just now come to my attention, I have composed a lyric following the same tune and giving full expression to this sentiment. How sad it is that words cannot do full justice to feelings!

The greater context here is one of the climactic moments of Chinese history, when Mongol armies, having occupied the northern territories previously held by the Jurchen Tartar Jin dynasty, swept south to conquer the Han Chinese Southern Song. The Gan River, running north through the heart of central-southern China in Jiangxi province, was one of their main lines of advance. The women in this narrative were directly in harm's way. They found their own voice in song lyrics written in sequence upon a bridge. But Liu Jiangsun (b. 1257 AD), the minor writer who found them there, patronizingly saw fit to preserve on paper just a few stray phrases from their 'unsophisticated' verses, and focused instead on his own composition (not included here). His lines –

In twenty years
When was that jade finally cast aside?
In what ground was the fragrance buried?

– suggest that he was looking back at the episode after twenty years and speculating about the woman Yang's death. Most probably he was writing on paper. But the energy for his own poem came entirely from the actions and responses of female victims finding expression through writing on a public surface. It was the prose commentary supplied by Liu that passed them into paper transmission, eventually entering his own collected works. But those too would have vanished if large parts had not been copied into the imperial encyclopedia *Yongle da dian* (1403 AD), and from there copied in turn into the later imperial compendium *Si ku quan shu* (1782 AD). Through such contingencies these women found their small place in the grand narrative.

We have briefly glanced at individuals in transit situations – women with broken lives; officials taking up posts in the deep south, accompanied by relatives; a philosopher revisiting a key point in his earlier life. For all of them, the writing of poems on walls was an action that worked on different levels. It was, first, an utterly ordinary, routine feature of travellers' lives, entirely taken for granted. It made a simple, open statement of their presence in a given place at a given time. It then gave a voice to their private emotions, and made them public. They were well aware that the writing would be whitewashed away and the walls would crumble. But some of them were conscious that paper would transcend those limitations, and so took steps to leave both the words and the sense of occasion to posterity. For others, that work was done by individuals we have met here, the diligent recorders of things seen and heard who have left us their notebooks to read after a thousand years.

In all of this, two distinct interfaces are involved. One stands at the point in individuals' lives when they commit their feelings (*qíng*) in a given setting (*jǐng*) to a written form marked on a wall. With this act they share them with any future visitor who may come by, and when the visitor reads their verse, potential communication becomes real communication. I have called this

primary communication. The other interface comes into play when a visitor transcribes the poem, with its preface or title, to a paper medium, and through that to the pages of a notebook. Transmission of that notebook (or the entry within it) then universalizes the communication, to the extent that even we in the modern Western world can share the feelings of those forgotten travellers in their unique situations. That is then secondary communication.

The poems studied here display different types of dynamic. In the first, wall-writings found their way on to paper, only to vanish later and leave mere echoes in a later notebook memoir. In the second, a contemporary traveller took the initiative to memorize, transcribe and publish what he had read 'in the field'; his notebook then made it famous. In the third, a great thinker's introspective wall-driven dialogue would be shared with the readers of his collected works. In the last, another traveller used what he read on a wall as inspiration for verse of his own, but that survived only by favour of editorial boards serving great imperial projects.

Through all this randomness, the poems point to a larger irony. Writing graffiti is not merely a fleeting, contingent act by perishable human beings. It is also a feature of human cultures that can, in the right circumstances, transcend and outlive those cultures themselves.

Graffiti and the Medieval Margin

Janine Rogers

Graffiti can occur anywhere, but this phenomenon has a particularly long affinity with marginal spaces: the unused rail car, the back wall of a building, the urban tunnel, overpass or alley. Graffiti in these marginal spaces have many functions, including identity formation, cultural critique, artistic expression and claiming space. In textual space, graffiti are quite literally marginal, and perform similar interpretive work to graffiti in built environments. However, graffiti in book-space differs from architectural graffiti in its more direct relationship with text and literature. I would like to explore the history of book graffiti by looking at its presence in the earliest codex forms in Western culture: the medieval manuscript.¹ I am interested in the ways in which medieval marginalia, as a broad category, can intersect with graffiti, specifically in regard to literary and textual meaning, and the ways in which our understanding of graffiti might inflect on our understanding of marginalia, and vice versa.

‘Graffiti’ is not a term commonly used in formal scholarship on medieval codicology or paleography, but it is recognized informally as a reality of medieval manuscripts. Medieval textual graffiti intersect with the more established codicological categories of marginalia, glosses and commentaries in medieval books. This exchange was recognized early in graffiti studies of the Middle Ages: in *English medieval graffiti*, Violet Pritchard (1967: 3–4, 17–18) frequently compares architectural graffiti to marginalia and illuminated borders. There is, in fact, a long-standing recognition that book-space in the medieval world was analogous to, and interacted with, architectural space (Kessler 2004: 107). Juliet Fleming suggests that medieval and early modern writing spaces collapsed the distinction between wall and page, and that inscriptional writing on both types of surface was a common practice in early modern and medieval cultures. Other scholars have looked at graffiti in early modern books (Jackson 2001; Scott-Warren 2010; Sherman 2009), but these discussions focus on printed books after the fifteenth century; in this chapter I would like to consider the resonances of the categories of graffiti and marginalia in manuscript books that were produced by hand before the age of print.

The idea of the ‘hand’ is of course integral to the *manu-script*. There is a nice conceptual link between ‘graffiti’ – the scratch – and ‘manuscript’ –

handwritten: the human hand is the bodily entity that writes or scratches. Such ‘scratching’ activities in medieval manuscripts included pen-trials, names, doodles, grotesques, poetic fragments, notes, household lists and a rather delightfully self-referential entity call the manicule, which I will discuss later. While many modern people may imagine a manuscript as a sumptuous illuminated text, the majority of medieval books were much more modest compilations, often combining homemade and professional copying from quire to quire. The composition of manuscript books was motile, frequently involving different individuals, locations and moments of production. Graffiti, or graffiti-like activities, are part of that complex circulation culture of medieval books, and are an important part of understanding medieval manuscript culture.

Scott-Warren (2010: 380) has pointed out that the study of graffiti in books is an important contribution to ‘the anthropology of the book’ that shows ‘the place of the book in the changing textures of personal, social and material life’. Adding to this, I think scholars should also consider how graffiti participates in the literary interpretation, in addition to its role as historical testimony. In the case of the medieval book – the manuscript – the literary is material in ways that are particular to the physical realities of book production in a pre-print culture. Understanding the literary nature of the medieval manuscript, and the material nature of the medieval text, gives us some new interpretive tools for reading graffiti across cultures and historical periods.

The living book: medieval manuscript culture

The material nature of texts in a manuscript is quite different from printed books, which were produced in multiple copies over short periods of time in relatively centralized circumstances. Manuscript books come into being as unique copies produced by hand, often piecemeal, and by many different participants over extended timeframes. Medieval book culture was a copyist culture. Almost from the point of composition, the author was displaced by the copyist: we have very few holograph copies of medieval texts. While we might commonly associate manuscripts with the hallowed space of monastic scriptoria, there was also a thriving commercial book trade in the later middle ages where copyists were organized to churn out quires by piece for the urban mercantile market. The medieval book was, by nature, a space that involved multiple contributors, and readers who wrote in books were stepping into an already well-populated, even public, textual space. In this respect, we have to re-think our post-medieval associations of book-space with privacy: in many respects, the spatial analogy of the medieval manuscript was not a ‘room of one’s own’ for one individual reader, but a busy urban street (with many temptingly blank walls).

The roots of manuscript culture were, however, ecclesiastic, and the

physical methods of book-making reflected a distinct philosophy of knowledge-making that was aesthetically driven and borne of the material nature of textual production. This textual philosophy was what palaeographer Parkes (1991) identified as medieval *compilatio* and *ordinatio*: these two interlocking systems encompass what today we would think of as text selection, copying, editing, organization, book design, page layout and decoration. *Compilatio* is the intellectual work of assembling together texts from different original sources, accessed either directly or indirectly through other compilations. Compilers needed to be creative – and quite intrusive – with the source material, in order to meet those intellectual and material requirements. They had to subtly add to and subtract from the text to fit it to new book spaces, and sometimes they had to summarize, bridge or edit specific arguments and ideas of the original. Yet because canonical scholastic texts (called *auctoritates*) were seen as spiritual artefacts of the divine mind, and a form of God's authority itself, great care had to be taken to spiritualize and validate the inevitable interference that compilation inflicted on the text. Much of that care was achieved through *ordinatio*, or the arrangement of the texts within the binding and on the page.

In the word *ordinatio* we see 'order', and this is not incidental to understanding the concept in medieval book culture. All text ultimately derived from the authority of God, and the role of the compiler was to assemble it in the image of God's creation: books and pages were routinely referred to as mirrors, or *speculi*, of the world. Therefore, order in the bindings or on the pages was not merely convenient, decorative or incidental: it was a representation of critical knowledge that, if properly incorporated by the reader, would allow them access to a complete understanding of the cosmos. Many of us have seen sumptuous medieval manuscript pages with illuminations, decorated initials, flourished borders, complex text blocks and intricate scrollwork populated with plants, animals, people and beasties of indeterminate nature. What modern viewers tend not to realize is that these stunning pages are forms of *ordinatio*; artefacts of complex organizational thinking about spatial information and the page. Camille (1997: 246) devoted much of his career to explaining how the medieval page articulates integrated knowledge about the world: the human, animal, vegetal and (for the medieval person) angelic realms each have their own identity, and yet are also connected to each other: the margin is 'a site for the confrontation and even intercourse of the flesh and spirit'.² In the visual dynamism of the medieval page, 'different levels of reality intermingle, sometimes benignly and other times as arenas of struggle, providing potent places for transformation and confrontation' (Kessler 2004: 101). By extension the medieval reader understood that these representative depictions of the ordered but integrated universe are not restricted to the page or book itself, but act to form connections between the world of text and language and the world of bodies and things (Franklin-

Brown 2012: 48). The space of the book was, on a very real level, the point of intersection between the mind of God, the mind of the reader and the rest of the material world (especially when we remember that the books themselves were actually *made of* plants and animals).³ *Compilatio* and *ordinatio*, as philosophical underpinnings to manuscript culture, emphasize the material, spatial and embodied nature of text and language in the codex. All of these qualities are important to understanding graffiti.

Another fundamental link between graffiti and marginalia is their shared tendency toward hybridity and fluidity: we see this in even the most formal illuminated borders. In *ordinatio*, the margin was a hybrid, polyvocal, symbiotic space that simultaneously marked a boundary and blurred that boundary. The idea that the margin both contains and disrupts the structures within it is reflected in the wide range of activities that could take place in the margin: on the one hand, it was the site of scholarly commentary, some of it highly formalized and essential to contextualizing the primary text. On the other hand, it was the site of resistance and rebellion: marginal words and images mocked, broken into, questioned or argued with the primary text (Schipper 2007: 25–7). Much of this was performed through the exquisite miniatures and grotesques: they are riotous, but still professionally produced by highly skilled artisans. Then we have the truly reactive marks of readers – scratched notes, symbols and drawings. Furthermore, we must include the category of marking left by people who had access to the page but did not, or could not, read it at all, and yet still ‘used’ the book. The medieval margins were busy discursive spaces with generations of sanctioned and unsanctioned dialogue; like graffiti, marginalia could be both disruptive and socially connective. Furthermore, marginalia design, both formal and informal, is often stylistically resonant with contemporary graffiti forms that emphasize the hybrid, the perverse, the abstract and the obscure: all of these qualities exploit the margin’s spatial designation of ‘in-between’. Such investment in liminality extends even to the most basic interpretive gesture of the reader, or perhaps we should say, the viewer.

Reading and seeing medieval manuscript graffiti

Do we read graffiti? Or do we look at them? As an initiating gesture to exploring these questions in relation to medieval manuscripts, we must note that marginalia in medieval manuscripts, like graffiti, seem to come in two primary types: the pictographic/diagrammatic and textual/linguistic.⁴ Often an individual instance of marginalia or graffiti combines the two types, for example a monogram or decorated grapheme of the sort used by taggers and other graffitists. The graphic/textual hybrids could be connected to other (more formal) medieval artistic forms in manuscripts such as *carmina figurata* and illuminated initials. But, like much contemporary graffiti,

interpreting marginal graffiti in medieval manuscripts often involves what Camille (1985: 32) identified as *seeing* and *reading* in a hybrid hermeneutic.⁵ This hybridity between visual and textual forms is sometimes heightened by the use of rebuses, riddles, puns and jokes that ask the reader to decode as much as read.

This decoding work has important implications for the construction of identity through graffiti forms in medieval margins, as identity is simultaneously obscured and revealed through visual and textual riddling. Ciphers, symbols and riddles are important sub-categories of medieval marginalia and share a lot of intellectual space with contemporary polymorphous graffiti that ask the viewer/reader to decode the sign. For example, the Findern Manuscript (Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6), an important collection of secular English poetry produced between 1450 and 1550 AD, contains several names in the margins. We see in Findern examples of riddled identities that demonstrate features which will become standard in today's, or later medieval/early modern graffiti practice, such as turning the name (or initials) into an orthographic or pictorial pun. One of the participants in the book inscribed a visual pun of his name, Lewiston, in the margin with a drawing of a pike (a fish called a 'luce' in Middle English) and a barrel ('tun') (Fig. 11.1). Pictorial riddles like the 'Lewiston' pun draw attention to the material dimension of language, turning words or names into objects.

Medieval marginalia also frequently involve verbal riddles, often written in rhyme, which is similar to poetic graffiti found on medieval architectural spaces.⁶ Riddles deliberately trouble identity formation: they both offer and obscure the 'answer' of who is speaking, and challenge the reader/viewer to stabilize what is a highly unstable construction (Rogers 2006: 1–3). In medieval manuscripts we see poetic graffiti that present interpretative challenges to questions of who is speaking or being represented; an example is the inclusion of female-voiced bawdy lyrics written in a student's schoolbook, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius MS 383 (Rogers 2006: 6–7). These rough little songs scrawled into the margins may have been the sort of thing that incensed Richard de Bury when he railed against the vandalism of books by 'shameless youths' (Camille 1997: 245). While it is interesting to conceive of lyric texts as graffiti, and to speculate on what graffiti culture can lend to lyric analysis (identity, resistance, transience and temporality), it might also be productive to flip that comparison and ask how a genre like the medieval lyric might help us understand graffiti. Lyrics are interesting from the point of reading graffiti because although textual forms, lyrics behave like material objects in their manuscript transmissions: Emily Steiner (2003: 75) identifies lyrics as a 'material genre' (see also Chaganti 2008: 158). Lyrics, with their small size on the page, were often used as filler, so their spatial presence is significant to their form (Boffey 2005: 2; Wenzel 1986: 84). Thus, lyrics can function as *ordinatio* as well as being determined

by *ordinatio* in the way of other forms of text. Lyric graffiti (if we can position that as a sub-genre for a moment) are especially capable of dialoguing with primary texts and dominant perspectives, and with other lyric texts. In the Findern Manuscript, for example, the part of the book where the Lewiston cipher is found contains a string of lyrics that effectively dialogue with each other on the perils of courtly love, including exchanges between male and female perspectives. The entire booklet of lyrics – rough and informally produced – in turn responds to the more canonical narrative texts that make up the core of the manuscript.

Stronge I no playn
 my desir payn 2 But bore yt full
 It was in eyn
 To say I sayn of Fortunes eyll

St. Jakob

And Gods pfect me in that state, where
Hath to me after a long journey
That I am come for, rest to rest

From all gladnesse & comfort
I am now brought in to Despair
And now my selfe & sin desert

Das sechste und letzte für den
Singer zu singen

Of worldly notes his talen goods
Which often dustier men get to hold

And again I found myself very forced.

rest in my mind to my great joy and
welfare both civil and moral

Wolch selbend hert. wogen passirne
was wuselt tope. wogich den nitt fferne
f. hant. I. lott. und. tannemmo

~~For guds I loft og taknemmelighed~~
~~for alle de goder som Gud har sendt mig~~ Skall jeg nu sende dig mine lykønskninger

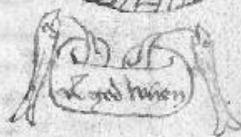


Fig. 11.1 Pictographic name inscription, ‘Lewiston’, in Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6, f.139r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Lyrics can also be inscriptional – about the very act of making a mark of identity, saying ‘I was here’. In fact, one of the defining requirements of the lyric form is the first-person speaking subject, an ‘I’. These lyric personas, much discussed and debated by literary critics, position themselves as autobiographical: a real, historical ‘I’ that speaks some emotional truth in

poetry. But this 'I' was also a fictive construction, meant to be multiple, transferable, even (to the medieval mind) universal (Allen 1984: 205; Spitzer 1946: 45). Space does not permit a thorough unpacking of the complexities of the lyric subject here, but the questions it prompts to the reader, as Fleming has pointed out, are easily transferred to the subject of graffiti: 'who speaks? from where? what do you want of me?' (Fleming 2001: 41). We know that the Gonville and Caius MS was produced – and graffiti'ed – by a male student, thus the female-voiced 'I' of the marginal lyrics is not 'authentic'. But it is the nature of both lyrics and graffiti to shift perspectives from their author's intention as physical and historical contexts around them shift. Lyric graffiti compound the 'self-fashioning' potential of graffiti generally, because identity is not only constructed by the imposition of the graffiti on the main text, but also because lyric first-person subjects are so fluid and can be fashioned in multiple ways. Was the student who scrawled female-voiced rhymes in his workbook indulging in a spate of misogynist contempt? Or experimenting with some literary cross-dressing? Theoretically at least, the potential is there for both these readings, and others.

The subject identity, and the intention, of any individual lyric or piece of graffiti might be reshaped or reclaimed by subsequent readers. I'm reminded of graffiti in Montreal from the 1990s, a time of tension between French-speaking and English-speaking communities, where someone wrote 'love-moi' on marginal spaces across the east end of the city. A second graffitist, with a wink to the city's libertine pan-sexual reputation, added a 'G' to the original, so that the plea for political tolerance was converted to the cheeky (but still bilingual) 'glove-moi.' This is essentially *compilatio*, which can act as a form of appropriation: a simple addition or reframing, with the understanding that the interpretation of the text is shaped by its contexts as much by its literal, intended meaning. Lyrics, with their unstable personas and ability to pop up in small spaces, can either be the thing added to or the thing that adds to something else: they can be both graffiti and the most accessible *compilatio* text.

If one of the primary functions of graffiti is the inscription of personal identity (however unstable), then surely the most obvious enactment of this is the writing of names or signatures into marginal spaces (Scott-Warren 2010: 366–8). Signatures and names are legion in both architectural and codicological graffiti (Pritchard 1967: 55). Camille (1997: 263) has discussed similarities between tagging and name inscriptions in medieval manuscripts. As Scott-Warren (2010: 368) also points out, many of these signatures are signs of hyper-literacy: ornate signatures are 'displays of intellectual accomplishment' akin to a 'piece' – a substantial work of graffiti art. In a similar vein, Anthony Bale (2014: 104) notes that 'bookplates' (inscriptions of book ownership) in medieval manuscripts are meant to 'fill, or repurpose, space ... they aim to mark, soil and tag the book indelibly'.

While some critics differentiate between substantive marginalia (like comments or annotations) and more incidental marginalia (like penmanship trials, bookplates and doodles), Bale (2014: 105) argues for seeing this as a continuum of literate culture, including a 'belligerent literacy' of excessive inscription of ownership marks in manuscripts that are meant to 'claim possession of the book as an artefact rather than to engage with the text'. As he points out, there is a natural link here with the territorialism of graffiti practice, 'especially as, like graffiti, these inscriptions tend to the fractious and oppositional'. As declarations of ownership, bookplates both are and are not appropriative graffiti: on the one hand, the owner cannot 'appropriate' his or her own book. On the other hand, especially in the case of acts of 'belligerent literacy', bookplates use that material ownership as an appropriation of the textual space, pulling attention away from the interpretive function of the text and refocusing on the book as simply an owned object.

Of course, there is a lot of non-textual and non-literary graffiti in the medieval margin too. Pictorial marginal graffiti are common, and certain images – cartoonish faces, for example – are frequently seen. The motivations for such entries seem vague, but the human figure in various forms seems to be a perennial interest of graffitists, and certainly fits into the ontological categories related to identity formation. One very common form of reader's mark is a pointing hand – the manicule – which is both graffiti-like and not, as it is a readerly intrusion that serves a specific interpretive purpose in drawing attention to certain parts of the text.⁷ This tradition, which has been traced back to pre-Christian classical rhetoric, can signify multiple things, including voice: the voice of the author, commentator or reader, or even the voice of God. By the early modern period its function was reduced to *note bene*, but for the medieval readership, it was a 'universal sign of acoustical performance, the speaking subject' (Camille 1985: 28). Thus, the body is evoked on multiple levels: the speaking mouth, the hearing ear, the touching, pointing, writing hand and, implicitly, the seeing/reading eye/I. This inscribes the bodily identity on the page, and reminds us of the hand-scratch link between manuscripts and graffiti.

Pictorial graffiti in manuscripts might also constitute full-scale illustration, such as the pencil drawing by a post-medieval reader of the courtly compilation Bodleian MS Fairfax 16. In this compilation, which includes an elegant illuminated frontispiece, there is a drawing of an Elizabethan 'courtesan': that is, a drawing of a woman with exposed breasts, wearing a ruff (Fig. 11.2; Norton-Smith 1979: xviii).⁸ This example, carefully if not formally executed, might be closer to our expectation of graffiti as a form of resistance or 'talking back'; in this case, it might mock the courtly pretensions of the Fairfax collection. Like contemporary graffiti, in this case the drawing might be seen as erotic, comic, cynical, angry – or simply absent-minded and inconsiderate. Like the bawdy lyrics in Gonville and

Caius MS 383 and the 'glove-moi' graffiti in Montreal, the Fairfax courtesan's presentation of the body is sexual, if not deliberately obscene. We might be tempted to read this as vandalism, but obscenity is also common in more formal illuminated borders in medieval manuscripts, which abound with sexual and scatological figures. Bodies are integral to identity inscription, but are also frequently presented in such a way as to simultaneously shock, mock or repel any readerly attempts to connect with that identity. Like riddling, obscenity pulls us in and pushes us away in the same gesture. We feel this with contemporary graffiti, many of which are sexual or obscene, and as a result the debates about the genre's artistic status are perennial. While we might debate the purpose and value of obscenity in graffiti throughout time, the persistence of obscene graffiti across periods, cultures and forms is surely worth thinking about (even while individual instances say: 'don't think about this'). But perennality itself is also a quality of graffiti: it lasts in time. It is historical; often, it is history.

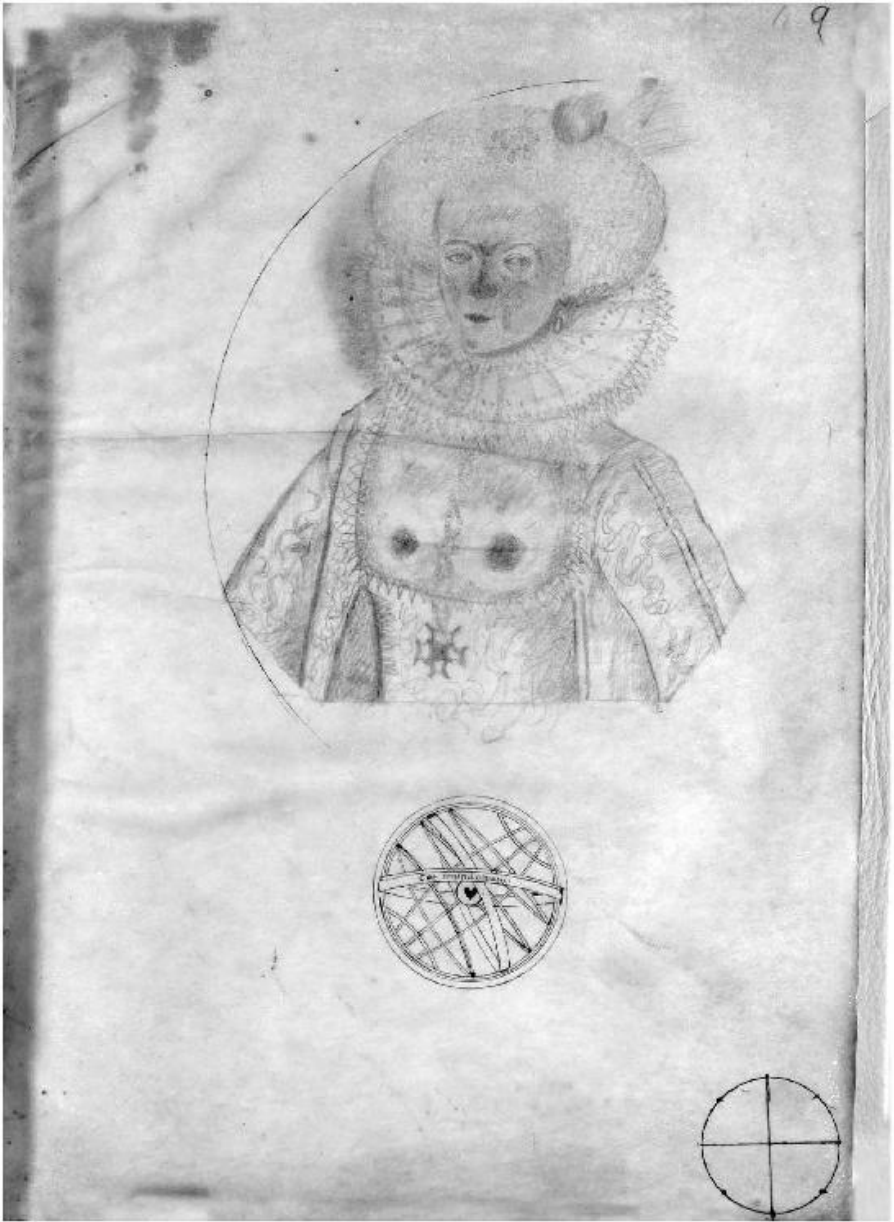


Fig. 11.2 Post-medieval drawing of a woman in Bodleian MS Fairfax 16, f. 9r. Image courtesy of Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

The time machine of graffiti

In H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, the Traveller, projected into the year 802,701, finds a ruin of a museum. In one chamber there is a 'vast array of idols – Polynesian, Mexican, Greek, Phoenician, every country on earth'. What does the Traveller do?

And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy.

Wells [1895] 2009: 55

The Time Traveller's compulsion to graffiti the statue with his own name (a name we readers never learn) is, as he admits, an irrational gesture: he is in a time where humanity as we know it – with the capacity for art, symbolic thought and complex written language – is extinct. There is no future in which there would be a reader of the graffiti. And yet the Traveller feels compelled to write his presence into history – or rather, since history cannot exist without agents who can interpret it, into time.

This depiction of a kind of an (almost) unconscious communication across the centuries offers an interesting analogy with palimpsest materials in manuscript books, where old writing on re-used paper appears through new text. Time itself seems to generate a dialogue or even an interpretive community that spans generations. Palimpsest material provides a particularly intriguing dimension to thinking about graffiti: it seems to produce a kind of agent-less graffiti, or rather, the agency of the graffiti must be attributed to the text itself more than a human mind: the material nature of the effects of time on the paper and vellum scratch the past into the new text: history itself becomes a graffitist. Fleming (2001: 39) points out that the 'graffiti' plural noun, and as we have explored above, the multiple and unstable subject identities of graffiti have parallels in riddles and lyrics. Not only does this call into question the 'reality' of the human agents who produce graffiti, it clusters them with other, perhaps non-cognizant, agents that might be included in the category of graffiti-maker. We would do well to remember here that animal paws can also scratch, as can non-sentient entities like tree branches in the wind, falling rocks, hail and even water. The act of making a mark can collapse categories: purposeful vs purposeless, meaningful vs meaningless. Studying graffiti means debating the extent to which we can include accidents of history – like a inky-pawed cat walking across a manuscript page – as either text or image (Fig. 11.3).⁹ The palimpsest page or the cat walking through ink may produce meaning without intention, and yet in many ways these examples may still perform the work of graffiti, and thus be seeable/readable, at the very least.

This brings us back to the place where we started this chapter: that certain qualities of space can generate graffiti seemingly of their own accord, as though the human agents were working in the service of the margin, book, wall or freight truck. Marginalia is by definition spatially determined (Sherman 2009: 24). Marginal spaces, on the page or in built environments, challenge us to think about binary categories: in and out, self and other, true and false, natural and unnatural, meaning and nonsense. Graffiti capture the marginal, liminal and complex realities of artistic and literary production that other art forms perhaps eschew or obscure: the interactions between individual and communal, between reader and writer,

between thought and gesture. These hybrid, fluid and contested categories were exercised in the margins of medieval manuscripts. Altogether, considering the relationship between graffiti and medieval margins forces us to examine our categories and expectations of graffiti as a concept, and demonstrates how deep and complex some of our graffiti traditions may run, not only in the history of the book, but also in textual cultures generally, as well as in other cultural spaces.

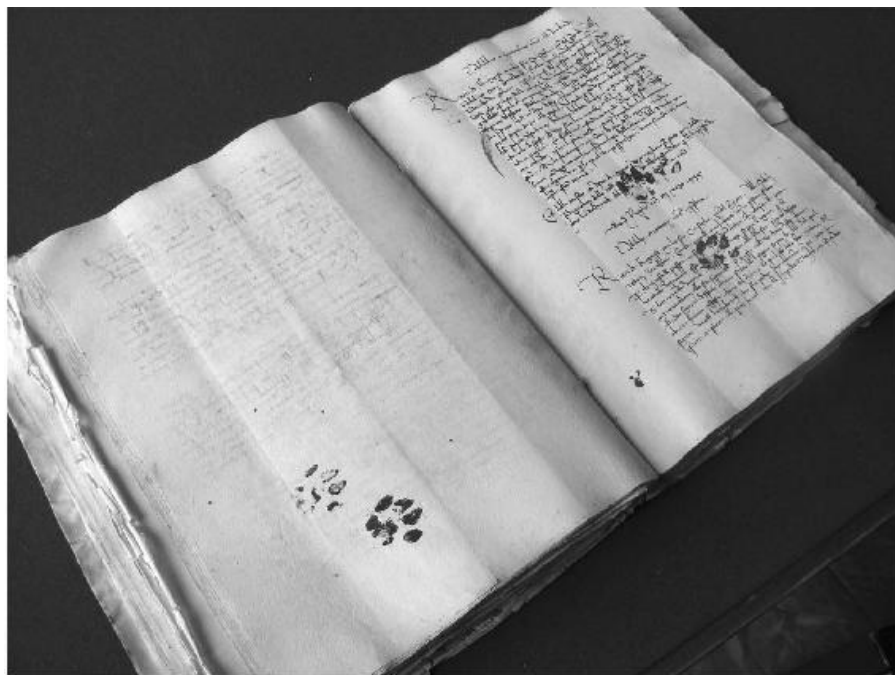


Fig. 11.3 Cat pawprints in Dubrovnik State Archives, *Lettere di Levante* vol. XIII, f. 168r. Image courtesy of Emir O. Filipovic.

Graffiti under Control: Annotation Practices in Social Book Platforms

Marc Jahjah

Since 2008, digital reading platforms (computers, tablets and mobile phones) allow users to produce annotations (notes, comments and highlights) while reading digitized books and share their notes on a vast array of mediatized spaces and media platforms. Nonetheless, these productions, as soon as they begin to circulate out of the platforms in which they originated, are also often used as resources for Amazon's book description pages on Amazon.com, or to analyse readers' alleged behaviour patterns so as to attract new users.

In the current market-orientated digital culture, these annotations are actually anticipated by the many reading/writing platforms – or 'dispositifs' in French – which create a discursive space. This discursive space is also a visual and gestural space, and we have come to expect the way in which these digital platforms present themselves and how they work, contrary to other material cultures such as those which are print-¹ or stone-based.² In fact, secondary inscriptions are regarded as primary inscriptions from an axiological point of view: they are indeed valued and promoted as a means of freedom for the reader, the opposite of how they are supposedly perceived in 'traditional' cultural industries – the latter being allegedly guilty of limiting the reader's expression. This discursive reversal has a hidden goal: to encourage the production of an ever-growing mass of editorial content that will be exploited in different ways.

I shall elaborate on three topics in this chapter: first, how discourses and imaginary patterns can be unearthed in these devices or platforms, and how value is placed on the collaborative annotation of screen texts. Secondly, how the editorial space produced on these platforms anticipates the users' production of annotations, and how they also anticipate the integration and circulation of these annotations. Lastly, I wish to review the consequences of such an anticipatory logic on the way these annotations are structured, and on which functions they have and how they are appropriated.

Annotations and their literate form as marginalia share a common destiny with graffiti: like them, they are situated in time – at least in print culture – after the launch of a monument or after establishing a text (Tura 2005). Like graffiti, formally, socially and from an enunciative standpoint they reconfigure the material support on which they are inscribed. Thus, it seems ideal to confront these two notions in order to understand how digital culture redefines them. Therefore, I hope to contribute to the exploration of their relationship, taking my cue from the way in which historians of the

book would investigate the matter (e.g. Scott-Warren 2010: 363–81), by testing these two notions on a limited corpus of digital culture: book social networks, which have led a vast digital environment of devices and platforms (tablet software, websites, etc.) to produce annotations since 2010.

Other objects may be chosen in the future as fields of investigation in order to compare graffiti and annotations in the digital space: for example, the way in which students showcase themselves through ‘selfies’ or by producing marginalia on social media (Facebook, etc.). These locations allow one to explore the scripters from a social point of view and explore their *savoir-faire*, competence and appropriation.

Reading together is better: an axiology of collective reading practices

In a market-based digital regime, the user’s tricks (how they may cunningly hijack the platform, similarly to the ‘braconnage’ or poacher school of thought) are not merely expected, but encouraged. This invitation, this injunction to participate, is made in the imperative mode and generally doubles as a valorization of collective reading. In an advertisement for the application SubText for iPad, we see a group of people associated with the following caption: ‘Reading together is better’, ‘get more out of your books’. Using the adverb ‘better’ implicitly establishes a comparison with a more individual reading practice. The latter is deprecated with the tagline ‘Get more out of your books’, because it does not include ‘friends’ and ‘authors’ in the reading activity. The act of annotating is thus conversely entrusted with the ability to yield a book’s ‘full’ potential and, as it materializes the specifically ‘social’ or collective practice of reading, allowing different stakeholders to engage in a dialogue.

Similarly, a banner advertisement for Copia dating back to 2013 partakes of the same axiology: ‘read better together’. The previous observations made about SubText are here confirmed: ‘read better’ is thus supposedly reading as a ‘group’ and making one’s reading visible through writings (‘notes’) that may be ‘shared’. As these activities are being encouraged, they are presented as bringing life to the margins and ushering in a new culture, supposedly more lively, and outgrowing print culture, which is judged as undeniably dead.

This conversational model echoes social constructs about thought processes and individual expression. Copia binds together graphically highlighted passages and icons of thoughtful personas (typical speech bubbles semiotically summoning the idea of thinking), laughing or reading.

The margin appears as a catalogue of readers’ ‘thoughts’. Indeed, book social networks always present themselves in a sort of naked transparency. They only serve as vessels for the users’ words, unmediated, without ever

affecting their expressive modalities. Through this rhetoric, the reading space becomes a space where one allegedly experiences a form of intimacy, borrowing well-known stereotypes from print culture: the annotation figure and its alleged intimacy have been associated with a dialogue between the reader and the text since the fourteenth century.³ This idea further reinforces the interests of the *dispositif* ('device/apparatus') whose survival depends exclusively, at least for some, on the users' activity.

As a result, this mythology of participation oscillates between two tendencies: *massification*, enabling a great number of readers to produce annotations, and *demassification*, which encourages mediations and creates simulacra of intimacy (Merzeau 2012). These two models are both servants of the participation mythology; a 'necessity to thrive individually ... a myth that all actors within the collaborative Web economy need in order to generate value' (Bouquillion and Matthews 2010: 82).

Framing the editorial space

The process of collecting annotations and their subsequent automated treatment rests upon a technical and editorial *dispositif* that ought always to avoid potential marginal uses, since this latter content is exploited in marketing and commercial strategies. Thus, users evolve in a documented space organizing and framing their perceptions and actions. This space itself is integrated in a system of frames that interlock within one another.⁴

Thus, a 'software-frame', represented by the many 'apps' available on iPad – such as Readmill⁵ – is contained in a 'material-frame' (Apple's tablet for instance) and a 'system-frame' (ios). Within the 'software-frame', we find a multitude of other frames, i.e. 'document-frames' – generally opening when activating a link and allowing the user to explore the interface in order to produce inscriptions. In the Readmill software, creating highlights or notes used to mean that a section needed to be selected. This action triggered three 'gestèmes' – much like phonemes, they represent gestural units, e.g. push, hold push, relinquish – the three of them acting together as a 'semiotic unit of manipulation' (Bouchardon 2011). Users must then choose between three actions, one of which – 'highlighting' – can modify a visual part of the 'document-frame' (the section then appears in yellow) and can open a new 'document-frame'.

In this new frame, classic rhetorical rules of persuasion apply: the *inventio*, i.e. figuring out 'what to say', as suggested by Readmill when prompted 'comment on your highlight', is followed by the *dispositio*, i.e. arranging in order what was decided: the software automatically takes care of that through the input fields. At this point comes the *elocutio*, or 'ornamentation', which corresponds here to the sharing buttons, and finally the *actio*, i.e. the spoken part of a discourse (Béguin-Verbrugge 2006). These are the quotation marks escorting any given excerpt. From production to circulation, the

writing system frames display how everything has been thought out in order to require minimal time and effort, and this is precisely why and how they ‘industrialize’ these writings (Moeglin 2005: 252). As a result, graffiti are under the sway of an ‘editorial function, in the sense of a *text editor* (responsible for giving form to the text), and of a *publisher* (guarantor of the circulation of the text)’ (Jeanneret 2014: 35).

Once saved, one’s annotations, and the ones produced by other users who also downloaded the text, can be consulted from a sliding panel on the right that is activated by clicking a button.

Automated transformations

The process of framing and anticipating graffiti follows a particular goal, which is to facilitate their transformations, in order to fulfil different objectives.

For some years now, Amazon has been tapping into this highlighted content produced by users through a Kindle device or the Kindle software (available for all tablets). Indeed, we can see today some of these highlighted content featured on Amazon’s book description pages on Amazon.com, next to readers’ comments and reviews. However, if highlights and quotes seem similar, even these two statements are actually not the same: Amazon automatically adds on its website’s quotation marks icons in an effort to turn highlights into citations. This small form thus embodies a new function: acting as a tracking device it can also be very useful to feed databases, whether to improve the ranking of the page’s search engine, or to cheaply produce editorial content (Jahjah 2016). Moreover, a link prompts you to ‘display 7 more popular bookmarks’; what Amazon values is to accumulate and showcase an increasing mass of engaged and active users.

A powerful editorial, technical and semiotic machinery is therefore capable of transforming a simple highlighted excerpt, in other words an individual enunciative act, into a fully fledged citation, leaving no traces for one to guess the various material and enunciative operations in play, or even to acknowledge how the process itself has been automatically orchestrated by Amazon’s ‘hand’.

These automated machines can facilitate the creation of true ‘chronotopes’, ‘[a] space and time universe developed by a media form and by the texts it offers’ (Jeanneret 2014: 10). After producing a few highlights with the Readmill software for iPad, a prompt offers the users to automatically gather in a ‘timeline’ of that content, in a way that neatly arranges their reading experience in a spatial representation.

In a similar process to the one analysed above, the highlighted sections first go through a graphic transformation: quotation marks enable them to morph into citations. They aggregate and form an organized toposyntax. Every single excerpt is included in these frames. They share an indexical and

relative function: they bound each textual unit's limits, and graphically converge into a single observation: 'You read for 30 hours and made 6 highlights in 3 books'. This visual product puts together diverse materials and gives them an editorial coherence within the same immediately recognizable graphic unit. This spatial organization is thus a graphic one *and* a communication instrument for the industrial actors exploiting these platforms: it makes it possible to order a reputed complex bundle of disparate data and makes it legible for a wider audience.

In discussing these transformations, we shall speak of 'neomediatic objects' (Manovich [2002] 2010), of 'plastigrammes' (Jeanneret 2012), of 'small forms' (Candel, Jeanne-Perrier, Souchier 2012), or of a fully fledged 'anthological model' that enables 'the transformation of collected elements into open and dynamic publications of potentially new knowledge' (Doueiri 2011: 70). These collected elements, these 'small forms', create the fantasy of a never quite finished material, always in the process of forming itself, in other words of a form able to turn back to matter, rather like statues turning back to unhewn marble. In the current economy, graffiti, like users, appear as editorial, marketing and commercial resources: they feed the system, the platform, as much as they draw in and gather the loyalty of new members.

If this anthologizing practice is not new (see Blair 2010; Châtelain 1999; Sherman 2009), we can see here how it sets up 'a new epistemological and formal configuration, capable of reorienting how we assess the links between knowledge and power' (Doueiri 2011: 164). Indeed, algorithmic and statistical logics determine how annotations produced from a Kindle device will be showcased: they have been chosen because of their popularity, for instance 'a number of X people have highlighted this section'. Similarly, if the reader produces graffiti with the Readmill software, the latter sets up the conditions of their appropriation.

If such a model is possible, it is due to the very nature of the inscriptions: on the screen, we identify them under their semiotic surface (margin, highlights, etc.), but from a computer's point of view, they are nothing more than resources – in other words, they are identifiers endowed with a stable identity called a 'URI'. For example, a webpage is given a URI (a URL), but the webmaster can choose to update it to give it a different appearance according to the reading device in use – whether computer, smartphone or tablet. A resource can therefore be affected diachronically and synchronically (Monnin 2013). Similarly, highlighting something, as a representation, appears differently on the Amazon website (as a quote) and on an iPad's Kindle software (as a highlight) even though as a resource, it possesses a stable identifier that authorizes these successive transformations.

Conclusion

In a market-based digital material culture, graffiti are expected. Consequently, from the moment of their production to their circulation on other media spaces, they are always framed and supported by an overall structure. In this industrial context, marginalia, one of the many forms graffiti can take, are nothing more than productive resources whose purpose is to feed databases. However, as scriptural forms are being industrialized, institutions and organizations are thinking about open solutions (such as Textus or Hypothes.is) that are capable of ensuring compatibility between different platforms and, as a result, guaranteeing knowledge circulation. Easy-to-use annotation software could become resources to tell the tale of our intimate geography, '[our] routes, [our] crossroads, [our] benches' (Bachelard [1957] 2011: 130), and could let us 'nestle, curl up' in them. Such software could give us the means to rediscover the links between margins, marks and walking,⁷ an invitation to allow ourselves some daydreaming *flânerie* with some humour or even silliness.

Notes

Introduction

1

We thank Max Ritter for reading the inscription.

2

<https://scribblingworkshop.wordpress.com>. See Preface.

3

We borrow the ‘laboratory’ metaphor from C. Jacob in his definitional essay about ‘lieux de savoirs’ (Jacob 2007: 18).

4

<http://tinyurl.com/zkqwzxl> [accessed 12 December 2016], especially 46:00–48:32 and 56:50 minutes.

5

<http://tinyurl.com/z5zeyzt>. [accessed 12 December 2016].

6

<http://tinyurl.com/gqjd78e> [accessed 12 December 2016].

1. The Scribes’ Cave: Graffiti and the Production of Social Space in Ancient Egypt circa 1500 BC

1

The tombs in the Theban area all received an official name or number. This one is numbered tomb 4 in necropolis 500, which corresponds to the north slope of the Deir el-Bahari area, excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, leading to its Egyptological number of MMA 504.

2

The reflections presented in this chapter are based on the complete study conducted by the author on this monument (Ragazzoli 2017).

2. Christian Graffiti in Egypt: Case Studies on the Theban Mountain

1

For a general bibliographic orientation, see Wilfong 1989.

2

For a general view of the epigraphic material (inscriptions and graffiti), see van der Vliet 2010.

3

Unless stated otherwise, numbers given to inscriptions in this chapter refer to those of

this publication.

4

Crum and Steindorff (1912), no. 75, l. 143–4: *Patermoute, son of John, the most humble reader of the catholic (church) of Jeme.*

5

The ceramic remains are studied by Guy Lecuyot; they include in particular fragments of amphorae, tableware and cooking pots dating to the sixth and seventh centuries.

6

The village of (Te)spania is located in the Oxyrhynchite nome (Padro 1999–2000).

7

Sbeht is the Coptic name for Apollinopolis micra.

8

The text is also mentioned in Winlock and Crum (1926: 7).

3. Graffiti or Monument? Inscription of Place at Anatolian Rock Reliefs

1

For similar poetic graffiti practices of Chinese travellers, see Dudbridge in this volume.

2

The mosque is locally known as Çukur Camii as it sits on a lower elevation than the street level today, possibly due to its Byzantine predecessor. The mosque was built in 1422 AD at the time of the Karamanoğulları dynasty in central Anatolia, and was sponsored by a certain Pir Hüseyin Bey (Boran et al. 2001: 37–9). The mosque had been previously renovated in the 1960s. Its design as an ‘ulu cami’ (columnar-hypostyle hall type) reflects back to the great renaissance of Seljukid architecture in the central plateau, but especially Konya.

3

I thank Max Ritter for reading the inscription.

4

In a recently published monograph, I investigated Anatolian rock monuments of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages from the perspective of landscape, place and memory (Harmanşah 2015), and some of my arguments pertaining to the comparison of graffiti and monuments have already been presented there (Harmanşah 2015: 113–16). The present chapter develops some new lines of argumentation departing from those presented in the book.

5

See Bonatz 2007; Seeher 2009; Glatz 2009; Glatz and Plourde 2011; Harmanşah 2015: 6. A number of the so-called rock monuments were also constructed in the urban landscape of Hattusha and its immediate environs, such as the Südburg Sacred Pool Complex, Nişantaş Monument and the Yazılıkaya rock sanctuary (Seeher 2011).

6

One can list here the rock relief of Kurunta at Hatip Springs outside of modern Konya (Bahar 1996), the rock monument of Hanyeri by Kizzuwatnean prince Ku(wa)lanamuwa (Ehrlinghaus 2005: 76–80), Hartapus’s monuments at Kızıldağ and Karadağ in the Karaman province (Rojas and Sergueenkova 2014: 144) and Warpalawaš’s monument at İvriz Springs (Harmanşah 2015). Most of these are borderland monuments south of the Central plateau.

7

For a recent discussion of the Hittite heritage among Syro-Hittite states, see e.g. Aro

2013.

8

Oreshko 2013: 368–71; see also Ehringhaus 2005: 84–7; Salvini and Salvini 2003.

9

For publications of this project, see Peschlow-Bindokat 1996, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2009.

10

Hawkins (2014: 21) contrasts the graffiti-like character of the Suratkaya inscriptions with the more substantial character of some of the other borderland monuments such as Karabel and Hatip, and concludes that this non-monumental character of the Suratkaya inscriptions may not prove any territorial control of the Latmos Mountain by the Kingdom of Mira.

4. Tweets from Antiquity: Literacy, Graffiti, and their Uses in the Towns and Deserts of Ancient Arabia

1

See <http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php> for more information on these.

2

Since the orthography of the Safaitic graffiti is entirely consonantal, showing neither vowels of any sort nor diphthongs, the names in these examples have not been vocalized, since this would be an exercise in guesswork.

3

For the letter-forms of Taymanitic and Dadanitic, see the appropriate rows in the script table on http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/images/script_table.jpg. For Ancient South Arabian, see Nebes and Stein 2004: 455–6.

4

Chiara della Puppa is preparing an edition of these and many other inscriptions from the Qurma area of north-eastern Jordan for her doctoral thesis. I am most grateful to her for allowing me to cite them here.

5

Jabal Says (ancient *Usqys*) lies east-south-east of Damascus near the north-eastern edge of the lava flows, at 33° 18' 36.38" N 37° 21' 17.12" E.

6

For the most recent work on the pre-Islamic Arabic text, see Robin and Gorea 2002 with corrections to the reading of the first line in Macdonald 2010a. For some of the Safaitic inscriptions, see C 3–104, though there are numerous others, see the OCIANA. For the Arabic texts, see Al-ʿUṣṣ 1964.

7

Thus, for instance, C 852–53, 857, 860 (of which the authors of 852 and 860 may have been brothers); C 3945–48 (the authors of which were certainly brothers); KRS 755–58 (three relatives and someone apparently not related); and Al-Namarah.M 58–60 (three relatives and someone apparently not related).

8

According to Lāila Nehmé (personal communication), 100 different professions are mentioned in the Nabataean inscriptions and graffiti.

9

For examples, see *CIS* ii nos 952, 976, 978, etc., and for a discussion of them, see Macdonald [2005] 2009, I: 93–94.

10

For the Taymanitic graffiti, see Müller and Al-Said 2002. The Imperial Aramaic graffiti was discovered in 2015 by the author, who is preparing it for publication.

11

These are JSNab 334, 337, Al-Duyayb 2014: 34 no. 1 and one discovered in 2015 by the author, who is preparing it for publication. On these see most recently the very interesting discussion in Rohmer (forthcoming).

5. Gezi Graffiti: Shout-outs to Resistance and Rebellion in Contemporary Turkey

1

The titular expression ‘Chemical Tayyip’ also recalls ‘Chemical Ali’, Saddam Hussein’s infamous chemical weapons chief. See Yanık 2015: 162–3 and figure 9.12.

2

This slogan and graffiti strategy was also deployed during the Egyptian uprisings of 2011 (Colla 2013: 44).

3

For an operatic rendering of a soccer song by members of Çarşı (Beşiktaş’s fan club), see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PI203fjwoU>.

4

For a documentary film exploring the role of soccer fans in the Gezi protests, see O. Waldhauer and F. Eslam, *Istanbul United*, <http://www.istanbulunitedthemovie.com/index.html>; and for the ‘Gezi Park March’ sung by fans of various soccer teams, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKFWA-8YA3I>. In a similar manner, the Ultras soccer fans in Cairo also contributed their own chants to the repertoire of slogans uttered during the Egyptian uprisings of 2011 (Colla 2013: 46).

5

For a further discussion of the *çapulcu* and the verb *çapulling* as well as other examples of graffiti and street art, see Gruber 2013: 31–3; and for the music video ‘Everyday I’m Çapuling’, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV0NTUY0Zls>.

6

For a video of this whirling ‘gas-masked dervish’ (*gazlı derviş*), see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWiYhq53S4>.

7

Inspired by this slogan, other Gezi graffiti showed the cancelled-out face of Erdoğan while urging: ‘Don’t come, Tayyip’ (*sen gelme Tayyip*).

6. Gladiators, Greetings, and Poetry: Graffiti in First Century Pompeii

1

The Metropolitan Museum of Art features numerous oil lamps decorated with images of gladiators. Gladiator imagery also appeared on tableware.

2

For more on the graffiti on this tomb, see Coleman 1999, Caldelli 2001, Garraffoni and Funari 2009, Cooley 2012: 112–13.

3

Garraffoni and Funari (2009) provide a nice introduction to gladiatorial graffiti at

Pompeii. For gladiator graffiti elsewhere in the ancient world, see Langner 2001, nos. 769–1062. The bibliography on Roman gladiators is vast, see, e.g., Fagan 2011, Gregori 2011, Knapp 2011, Coleman 2009, Bomgardner 2000, Hope 2000, Junkelmann 2000, Futrell 1997, and, for epigraphic material, the series of *Epigrafia anfiteatrale dell'Occidente romano*, 8 vols. (Rome: Quasar).

4

The first two issues of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* vol. IV included indices with a vocabulary index that listed the appearances of popular words. The more recent fascicles were not given an index. Fortunately, the Clauss-Slaby Epigraphic Database (<http://www.manfredclauss.de/>) provides a powerful tool to query the graffiti. The graffiti of Pompeii are also coming online via the Epigraphic Database Roma (<http://www.edr-edr.it/>) and the Ancient Graffiti Project (<http://ancientgraffiti.org>).

5

Greetings could appear in clusters, as happened at the campus, a large colonnaded building beside the amphitheatre. There, a single column featured greetings addressed to: Mysticus, Chloe, Asella, Sautranus and the boy (*puer*) Eucapa (*CIL* IV.8618–8622). Another cluster in the House of the Four Styles involved eleven graffiti addressing greetings to five different women (Benefiel 2011); this is the only location that features greetings to women without any greetings to men.

6

Also of interest are poetic verses inscribed in the corridor between the large and small theatre and attributed to a certain Tiburtinus (*CIL* IV.4966–4973), see Varone 2002:106–8; Lieberg 2005; Milnor 2014: 142–51.

7

Cooley and Cooley provide a table listing all quotations of literature among the Pompeian graffiti (2014: 2923, Appendix 2). Five different lines from the *Eclogues* appear among Pompeian graffiti, while one quotation from the *Georgics* appears twice.

8

CIL IV.1893 = Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.77–78; *CIL* IV.1894 = Propertius 4.5.47–48.

9

Giordano 1966: no. 46; Solin 1975: no. 66; Varone 1990: inscription I; Benefiel 2010a: no. 43: *{V}asia quae rapui quaeris formosa puella. / Accipe quae rapui non ego solus; ama. / quisquis amat valeat*. For illustration, see Benefiel 2010a: 68, fig. 9.

10

Ranieri Panetta (2004: 159) provides an illustration.

11

Studies on the poetic graffiti include, e.g. Lebek 1976, Gigante 2000, Varone 2003, Kruschwitz 2004, 2006 and 2008, Lieberg 2005, Cugusi 2008, Milnor 2009 and 2014. Rudolf Wachter (1998) has discussed the literary influences of the unprovenanced epigrams, which Marcello Gigante (1979) called the ‘voices of the city’.

7. A New Look at Maya Graffiti from Tikal

1

The term clustering used here and elsewhere in this chapter comes from the work of Baird and Taylor (2011).

2

We do not have any evidence that the ancient Maya scratched imagery on the exterior surfaces of painted and stuccoed architecture, since these finished surfaces have not lasted over the years. Inside the buildings the fragile carvings have been protected from the elements.

3
Independently in 2013 while preparing for the ‘Scribbling Through History’ conference at Oxford University, I came to the same conclusion as Walker. His small article was unknown to me until I reviewed, in detail, the research of Jaroslav Žralka, *Pre-Columbian Maya graffiti* (2014). The article by Walker and the book by Žralka have enhanced my understanding of graffiti and bolstered many of my interpretations.

4
See new research by Žralka and Hermes (2009), who propose that some imagery from the site of Yaxha depicts a sense of receding space and ritual within a believable landscape.

5
This visual trope carved on Lintel 3 within the burial temple of Jasaw Chan K’awiil is a sacred text used in ancestor worship (Olton 2015b). Alternatively, the Ruler and Protector theme in its narrative form, may have been celebrated in performances within the ceremonial core of Tikal, including the area of Court 2, adjacent to Maler’s Palace and Room 9. An unofficial interpretation of the Ruler and Protector is found in the graffiti from Room 9. The graffitist created images that combined the composition of the sacred trope with the spontaneity of narrative.

6
The Bat Palace compound adjacent to Temple II has been closed to all visitors because of modern-day damage to the graffiti.

7
In these other depictions, the ruler is also depicted as a child-like figure.

8
For a visual inventory of the Ruler and Protector graffiti (also known as ‘litters with patron deities’) at Tikal and elsewhere, see Plates 38 and 39 in Žralka 2014.

9
See the Jaina Island Figurines.

10
Exceptions include, Karl Taube’s chapter ‘Ritual humor in Classic Maya religion’ (1989) and Victoria Bricker’s book *Ritual humor in highland Chiapas* (1973).

8. Visitors’ Inscriptions in the Memphite Pyramid Complexes of Ancient Egypt (c. 1543–1292 BC)

1
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2
For cultural systemic and non-systemic use, see van Walsem 2006: 111–20; the term was ‘introduced to Egyptian archaeology by Polz (1987: 22)’ – so Ockinga 2007: 137. See also Ockinga 2007.

3
For the cult of Kagemni, see also Hamilton 2016. A continued cult of king Teti is also of interest, although graffiti of the officiants in the precinct of Teti were not recorded. On the cult, see Málek 2001.

4

For the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, see Frood 2013.

5

An interesting example is the graffiti which are probably by the cult officials of Senenmut, who marked tomb texts with dates, perhaps when the recitations were due (Martín Valentin and Bedman 2011), compared to Senenmut's subordinates in MMA 504, see Ragazzoli in this volume.

6

Valley of the Kings also offers numerous examples of graffiti left by local staff (workmen and scribes of the Tomb, with different motivations), compare Dorn 2014.

7

Scribes' grotto MMA 504, see Ragazzoli in this volume.

8

See concisely Frood 2013. For an overview on temple graffiti, see Peden 2001. For new techniques in temple graffiti documentation, see Frood and Howley 2014.

9

Fewer Late Period visitors appeared in the area, see Khaled 2011 on Abusir, and Fakhry 1959: 46–7; also PM III2, 881 on Dahshur; Demotic texts in the Step Pyramid, e.g. Gunn Mss. B.3.1, Gunn Mss. XV, 2.4 and XII, 6, Firth and Quibell 1935: 85.

10

The character of feasts that might have fostered graffiti production was most clearly shown in the Theban Feast of the Valley, see Marciniak 1968; 1974; Ragazzoli forthcoming. Memphite material includes fewer examples, e.g. a feast of Ptah (Navratilova 2015b: 199–202).

11

Observations in Frood 2007: 15–19, with a discussion of preceding literature.

12

It reacted to infrared photography, which is suggestive of organic components known from inks on scribal palettes. Infrared photography tested on graffiti in Dahshur, Senwosret III, black pigments (result: carbon black) on palette MMA 47.123 a,g (scribal) and MMA 26.7.1295 (painter) using non-destructive X-Ray fluorescence, courtesy of Ann Heywood, July 2013.

13

Fischer-Elfert 2003. Compare Hassan 2013: 183–91, but see Ragazzoli 2017 for a different interpretation.

9. Carving Lines and Shaping Monuments: Mortuary Graffiti and Jews in the Ancient Mediterranean

I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Ms. Revital Weiss, the Director of Beit Shearim National Park and Dr. Tsvika Tsuk, the Director of the INPA Archaeology and Heritage Department as well as the support of prof. Seymour Gitin, Director Emeritus. of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.

1

Decade-long debates about Jewish 'universalism' or 'particularism' question the social and cultural cohesiveness (or lack thereof) of those who designated themselves as Jews throughout the Greco-Roman world; for a summary of related points, see Schwartz (2002: 155); also Cohen (1998); Rajak (1999); Gruen (2004).

2

A proportionally large number of Hebrew inscriptions were found inside this catacomb, which probably dates to the later Byzantine period; it included many Byzantine lamps. For discussion of this and related points, see Avigad 1976: fig. 41.

3

Heights of these figures vary, averaging between 7–13 cm high and 2–5 cm wide.

4

See discussions in Tilley 2004 and 2008.

10. Verses on Walls in Medieval China

1

This essay is a companion piece to another: Dudbridge (2016). The opening section is largely the same in both, but the primary sources discussed are different. References to secondary literature in Chinese are mostly given in the latter piece.

2

For English-language readers: Zeitlin (2003); Zhang (2005). For references to scholarship in Chinese, see Dudbridge (2016: 6, n. 1, 7, n. 4).

3

Nugent's study explores the relationship between oral and paper media in the Tang period. A parallel culture of oral narrative taking written form is discussed in Allen (2014).

4

In the present-day province of Jiangxi.

5

Low-ranking officers in attendance at court audiences.

6

Meng xi bi tan [Brushed Conversation from Dream Brook] was composed from 1088 AD, and probably already in print in Shen's lifetime. Dream Brook was the name of his garden estate.

7

Yuan Jizhong was a contemporary: Yuan Shu (1131–1205 AD). *Can tong qi* was a supposedly ancient text dealing in part with alchemy, and these remarks by Zhu Xi take the form of a comment added at the end of it, alluding to the alchemical theme.

8

A county now in the north-west of Fujian province.

9

A kind of fungus regarded as an auspicious omen and reported to the throne as such; credited with medicinal, even life-prolonging, qualities, and still cultivated by Chinese pharmacists.

10

From the poem 'Drinking wine, III': 'But how long is a lifetime after all? / It is brief as the startling lightning bolt. / Staid and stolid through their hundred years / What do they ever hope to get from this?' Translation by Hightower (1970: 127), followed by a commentary discussing the cruxes and choices facing the translator.

11

Identified as Zhangshu, now part of Yichun County in modern Jiangxi province, at the confluence of the Ganjiang and Yuanshui rivers.

12

The original phrase: 'Unheard-of old gentleman'.

11. Graffiti and the Medieval Margin

1

I am following up on some of the preliminary observations about graffiti and the medieval margin offered by Michael Camille (1997: 261–5) at the end of the twentieth century, who considered the artistic resonances between marginal activities in medieval books and modern streets.

2

See his masterful exploration of marginal artwork in *Image on the edge: the margins of medieval art* (1992).

3

A point made by several scholars, see for example Camille 1997: 259.

4

On the definitions and categories of marginalia, see Kerby-Fulton 2012: 210; Jackson 2001: 13, 44–6; Sherman 2009: 20–4.

5

Lorraine Daston has discussed the ‘hermeneutical hybrid’ of reading and seeing in the context of the scientific archive; I echo her phrase deliberately (Daston 2012: 174–5).

6

Pritchard (1967) gives examples on 144–6 and 172–3; Bale (2014: 95) demonstrated that a scribe might have used rhymed riddle-verse for some bookplates, and Fleming (2001) offers numerous examples of riddle-poems on early modern walls.

7

On manicure, see Sherman 2009: 25–52. Pritchard (1967: 132–3) gives an example of a manicure-like drawing of a hand as wall graffiti; she suggests they might be linked to Divine Hands found in manuscripts.

8

The Fairfax ‘courtesan’ drawing may be compared to a similar wall drawing of a bare-breasted woman in an elaborate headdress, rather more crudely done, in a church in Stetchworth. Pritchard (1967: 58) describes her as a ‘lady of fashion’ and connects the headdress to Queen Philippa (c. 1330 AD), but the bared breast troubles this reading, somewhat.

9

[Http://tinyurl.com/d8xu8q2](http://tinyurl.com/d8xu8q2) [accessed 15 December 2016].

12. Graffiti under Control: Annotation Practices in Social Book Platforms

1

‘[I]n medieval manuscripts, as in today’s printed books, [marginalia] must find their place in an object that, with a few exceptions, doesn’t expect them’ (Chartier 2013). Two restrictions to this point are: 1. readers in the Middle Ages did not know this rupture: ‘People read to write: this is the sense of the *compilatio*. They read and wrote together when commenting and annotating’ (Petrucci 1995: 138); 2. from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, marginalia gradually migrated to occupy, as today, the bottom of the page (Dürrenmatt 2004), in order to let readers invest the spaces thereby left vacant (Brayman Hackel 2009).

2

‘[graffiti] can be defined as secondary inscriptions, which are not part of the primary state/function of their environment.’ (Ragazzoli 23rd–25th September 2013)

3

Eden (2012) shows how rediscovering Cicero's letters led Petrarch to design a new reading model in 1345 AD, more intimate and informal. Schott (2012) also identified traces of a more intimate way of reading in the fourteenth century among scribes when addressing their readers for instance to complain about their work conditions.

4

I rely on distinctions made by Souchier (1999).

5

Readmill does not exist anymore, it was sold to Dropbox in 2014.

6

Submission of 'signs and significant forms of an ordinary support' (Laufer 1989: 11).

7

'Margin' from the latin 'margo' (1225), 'edge' or 'rim' derived from the 'mark' (sign), which gave birth to the germanic 'marka', 'border', 'march', 'mark' (see Cormier 2005).

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- C Safaitic inscriptions published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V. Inscriptiones Saracenicas continens, Tomus 1. Inscriptiones Safaiticae*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1950–1.
- CIS ii Aramaic (including Nabataean) inscriptions published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars II Inscriptiones Aramaicas continens*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889–1954.
- JSNab Nabataean and other Aramaic inscriptions published in Jaussen and Savignac 1909–22.
- KRS Safaitic inscriptions recorded by the late Geraldine King and published in the *Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia* (OCIANA) (<http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd-ociana>).
- LP Safaitic inscriptions published in Littmann 1943.
- MS Miscellaneous Safaitic inscriptions published in the *Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia* (OCIANA) (<http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd-ociana>).
- Al-Namārah.MSafaitic inscriptions recorded By M.C.A. Macdonald at al-Namārah (Syria) and published in the *Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia* (OCIANA) (<http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd-ociana>).
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Section 2: Graffiti and the Wall

Introduction

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